

Tibet, the Dalai Lama, and the Geopolitics of Reincarnation



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Summary: Reincarnation and China's Strategic Objectives

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is accelerating the imposition of elaborate plans to compel compliance on the Tibetan Buddhist practice of reincarnation as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama ages.

Since its introduction to Tibet in the seventh century, Buddhism has fundamentally shaped Tibetan civilization and today is integral to Tibetan life and cultural identity.

In the course of upholding the Buddhist tradition, Tibetans have evolved a unique system of recognising reincarnations (or *tulkus*) of spiritual masters who are dedicated to developing compassion and helping all sentient beings. From the Fifth Dalai Lama's leadership in the 17th century, reincarnate lamas became the core of the Buddhist government of Tibet, combining religious and political authority.

Tibet's Buddhist civilisation has been further strengthened under the leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama, who united Tibetans from all Buddhist schools and regions of Tibet as well as spreading Tibetan Buddhism around the world.

Today, the spiritual authority of the 14th Dalai Lama spans the Himalayas, including Nepal, Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan, traditionally Buddhist countries such as Japan, Vietnam, and Myanmar and the Central Asian Russian republics of Tuva, Kalmykia and Buryatia. It also encompasses India, home to the 14th Dalai Lama, and Mongolia, the largest free country with a majority Tibetan Buddhist population in the world. The Dalai Lama's reach extends to the West and across the People's Republic of China, where many Chinese are devoted to Tibetan religious teachers.

Beijing's struggle to appropriate and control matters at the heart of Tibetan religious identity emerges from an aim to secure total control in Tibet and to project its dominance beyond its borders.

These political and religious forces set the stage for an intensifying geopolitical scenario linked to China's elaborate plans to install a Communist-Party endorsed figurehead as the next Dalai Lama and the possible impacts of this both in Tibet and outside the People's Republic of China.

In 1954, Mao Zedong famously told the young Dalai Lama that "religion is poison". Since China's invasion of Tibet in 1949/50, it has destroyed thousands of monasteries, burnt religious texts on great pyres, tortured religious teachers and forced them to undergo "patriotic re-education" and "hard labour". China continues to annihilate Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet by demolishing religious structures, enforcing ideological education on the monks, and unleashing its virulent campaigns against the Dalai Lama labelling him as a "splittist" and a "wolf in monk's robes".¹

Given this stance by the Chinese government, it might have been expected that Beijing would end the institution of the Dalai Lama entirely.

However, the (CCP) has developed a strategy to exert control over the Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system. This includes an insistence that it is the prerogative of China to recognise the next Dalai Lama, and has a design to target not only Tibetans but also the broader international community as a means to secure authority in Tibet and build influence across the Tibetan Buddhist world.

Beijing's struggle to appropriate and control the reincarnation system strikes at the heart of Tibetan religious identity. Reincarnation is central to Tibetan Buddhist belief and practice rooted in the concept of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

In Tibet, the Buddhist principle of rebirth evolved into a distinctive form of practice recognising a chain of rebirths of a particular spiritual master. The Dalai Lama is one such reincarnation that originated

in the 14th century. The current Dalai Lama is the 14th reincarnation of his lineage and is one of the world's most respected moral and religious leaders.

As he ages, Tibetans face painful and difficult questions about the future.

In 2011, understanding this eventuality, the 14th Dalai Lama issued a written document concerning his succession in which, among many things, he stated that he may appoint someone as his successor while he is still alive,² a practice that is rooted in historical precedent. The CCP rejected the document claiming that “only Beijing can approve his successor.”

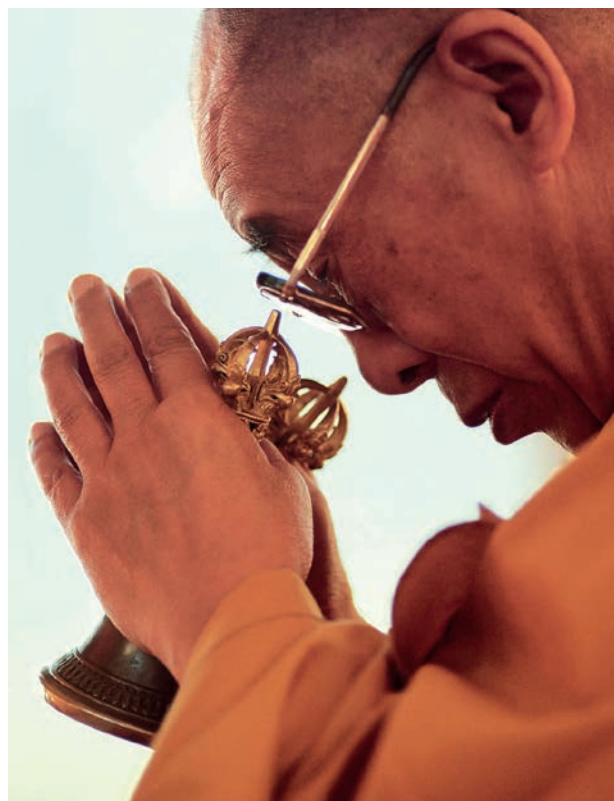
China's ‘Sinicization’ of Tibetan Buddhism and its interference in the reincarnation system has far-reaching implications and seeks to finally break and reshape Tibetan identity. A Sincized Tibetan Buddhism aims to break the deep connection of Tibetan people with the Dalai Lama and involves a dystopian system of high-tech surveillance and policing of monasteries and nunneries. Thousands of monks and nuns have been expelled from religious institutes, and some subjected to extreme ‘patriotic’ ‘re-education’ campaigns that have involved torture and sexual abuse.

China's policies in Tibet and its position on reincarnation are based on the notion of ‘stability maintenance’ (*weiwen*), of achieving ‘long-term stability’ as a political euphemism to crush dissent or moderate opinions that counter the CCP, and ensuring compliance to the Party state.³

The reincarnation of Tibetan religious leaders and particularly the succession of the Dalai Lama are described by officials as “major political struggles” for “stability maintenance”. In April 2020, Liu Zhiqiang, deputy secretary of the Party Committee in Lhoka City, U-Tsang (Chinese: Shannan, Tibetan Autonomous Region), ordered a “focus on dealing with the major political struggles of the 14th Dalai Lama's death and reincarnation” in order to “maintain stability”.⁴

China sees religious belief as one of its most significant problems in Tibet, which has been confounded by its failure to draw Tibetans away from their deeply-rooted spiritual practice and religious beliefs, in particular their allegiance to the Dalai Lama.

This report outlines the geopolitical implications of China's plan to ‘Sinicize’ Tibetan Buddhism and its attempt to control the Dalai Lama's succession.



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama
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Key Findings:

- Newly discovered, internal CCP briefings reveal that Beijing has developed a public relations strategy targeting Western governments and media outlets involving a plan to end international support for Tibet in what they term the 'post Dalai era'. Part of this plan includes installing their own Dalai Lama candidate.
- The Dalai Lama is the most important religious and secular figure for the Tibetan people and is central to the future of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama's institution commands legitimacy and spiritual authority encompassing the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas, Central Asia, and Mongolia. In China, increasing numbers of Chinese Buddhists follow Tibetan Buddhism.
- Combined with extreme measures of 'Sinicization', China's aim is to ensure more sustained control over Tibet.
- China views control over Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation as a critical component in its efforts to secure authority in Tibet, eliminate Tibet's linguistic, cultural, and religious identity, and build influence and dominance across the Buddhist world. A precedent was set in 1995 by Beijing's seizure and disappearance of the young boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognised by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, and the installation of their candidate, Gyaltzen Norbu.
- China's efforts to control Tibetan Buddhism extend to India, Mongolia as well as Bhutan, Nepal, and Central Asia.
- China has strengthened political education and indoctrination efforts, targeting not only monks and nuns but also lay Tibetans at local levels in order to break existing loyalties to the exiled spiritual leader. Tibetans found to be communicating with exiled communities, particularly Dharamsala, over the identification of reincarnate lamas risk torture, imprisonment, and even death.⁵
- Tibetan Buddhist forums linked to Xi Jinping's 'Belt and Road Initiative' are organised to leverage Tibetan Buddhism and expand extraterritorial influence
- The 14th Dalai Lama has affirmed that:
 - He is the sole legitimate authority over any future reincarnation.
 - If he is to reincarnate, it will be in a free country outside the People's Republic of China.
 - It is up to the Tibetan people and Buddhists across the Himalayas and in Mongolia to decide whether the Dalai Lama institution should continue.
 - An adult may be chosen as his successor.
 - A female could be recognised as a break from a centuries-old tradition.
 - A decision will be made in close consultation with Tibetan religious heads and others when he is 90 years old in 2025.

China's Blueprint to End Global Support for Tibet in the 'post Dalai Lama era'

China's leadership is aware of the centrality of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and its future, and Beijing's aggressive stance is fuelled by anxieties over its ability to maintain stability in Tibet.

Previously unseen, influential Chinese policy documents,⁶ obtained by skilled Tibetan researchers with contacts in PRC, reveal that the Chinese government is making elaborate preparations for what it describes as the 'post Dalai era', a Chinese term that has been adopted in order to convey China's plans to capitalise on the passing of the Dalai Lama and to choose a successor.

One document makes a clear distinction between the 'late Dalai era' when the Dalai Lama is alive and political power resides with the Tibetan Government-in-Exile,⁷ and the 'post (or after) Dalai era', which refers to the period after he has passed away.⁸

The papers disclose China's emerging strategy that the demise of one of the world's best-loved and most deeply revered spiritual leaders will present a 'strategic' and 'historic' opportunity for Beijing to reset Tibet policy and end international support.

The papers, written by Chinese scholars from Party-run institutes, acknowledge that efforts to influence global opinion have to date been a dismal failure because of the strength of support for the Dalai Lama and Tibet on the world stage.

They provide insights into the insecurities and positioning of the CCP as they double down on oppressive control measures, convey a sense in the Party that outcomes nevertheless are uncertain, and offer rare insights into the Party's thinking and preparations. One paper acknowledges that there is a possibility that "hostile Western forces will make ever more noise about the 'Tibet issue' and the international weight of the Tibet issue is unlikely to lessen because of the passing of the Dalai era."⁹

The first paper¹⁰ also states that the Dalai Lama's passing presents China with an opportunity to "escape its passive situation in communicating on Tibet" and a later paper from 2017¹¹ states that the reincarnation issue "will be unavoidable but should also be seen as an opportunity".¹² Both papers raise the need for the CCP to build a public relations strategy focused around training China's Panchen Lama to replace the "vanished idol" (Gedhun Choekyi Nyima who was chosen by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama and was disappeared in 1995 – see section six, '**The Panchen Lama Precedent**') – and to use the situation to strengthen China's position internationally beginning a 'new era' of control over Tibet.

The possibility of violence in Tibet when the Dalai Lama passes is also raised; however, this analysis ignores the reality that an outbreak of violence would likely be the result of China's interference in the selection process and oppressive measures against Buddhism. Tibetans overwhelmingly follow the Dalai Lama's position on non-violence despite decades of harsh political crackdowns that criminalise even the mildest expression of loyalty to the exiled spiritual leader.

The overwhelmingly peaceful protests of 2008, characterized by the participation of young people many of whom carried photographs of the Dalai Lama and called for his return to Tibet, became a turning point for China's leaders as it became clear that they had failed to weaken the influence of the 14th Dalai Lama and assimilate Tibetans into the majority Han culture.

Despite decades of strategic effort by Beijing to 're-educate' Tibetan monks and nuns, one paper¹³ outlines the ongoing lack of trust in monastics stating that only 'senior-level tulkus' (those approved by the Communist Party), should be allowed to "preach Buddhist ideas" and that ordinary lamas and tulkus "must not be allowed to discuss religious freedom" because he believes it "is not their strength and it is not in their work."

It is further stated that if the central government is to impose their own candidate for the 15th Dalai Lama, “then the moulding of the 15th reincarnation’s image should be put on the agenda as soon as possible.” This process is known to be underway. According to a source in Tibet, a 25-person ‘Preparatory Small Group’ in Lhasa has been established to oversee arrangements for selecting the 15th Dalai Lama.¹⁴

The 14th Dalai Lama’s Position

Successive Dalai Lamas have played the central role in the Tibetan polity combining religious and political authority. This complementary system of governance referred to as the “*chösi sungdrel*” became a landmark of Gaden Phodrang¹⁵ Government under which successive Dalai Lamas ruled over Tibet. In exile, the Gaden Phodrang Trust was set up as the primary body¹⁶ tasked with managing affairs relating to the Dalai Lama and the succession process.

On 14 March 2011, the Dalai Lama issued a historic letter to the exile parliament to devolve his political authority to a democratically-elected leadership. The Dalai Lama stated that “the essence of a democratic system is, in short, the assumption of political responsibility by elected leaders for the popular good,” and that “the time has come for me to devolve my formal authority to such an elected leadership.” Since then a Sikyong (Tibetan President), elected by Tibetans across the diaspora, has taken over all political responsibilities of the exiled administration.

In his paper, ‘New changes and countermeasures against Tibet independence splittist activities in the post-Dalai era’, Wang Yanmin implies that the devolution of political power to democracy in exile is regarded by China as a strength for the Dalai Lama.

In September 2011, the 14th Dalai Lama made a formal written declaration concerning his succession, giving a definitive statement of his authority over the process of succession, thus denying any CCP legitimacy in the process.¹⁷

Giving his reasons for making the statement, the Dalai Lama said: “The authoritarian rulers of the People’s Republic of China, who as communists reject religion, but still involve themselves in religious affairs, have imposed a so-called re-education campaign [...] concerning the control and recognition of reincarnations [...] This is outrageous and disgraceful. The enforcement of various inappropriate methods for recognising reincarnations to eradicate our unique Tibetan cultural traditions is doing damage that will be difficult to repair.”

He added: “Moreover, they say they are waiting for my death and will recognise a 15th Dalai Lama of their choice. It is clear from their recent rules and regulations and subsequent declarations that they have a detailed strategy to deceive Tibetans, followers of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the world community.

“Therefore, while I remain physically and mentally fit, it seems important to me that we draw up clear guidelines to recognise the next Dalai Lama, so that there is no room for doubt or deception.”

The 14th Dalai Lama has often repeated that the purpose of reincarnation is “to fulfil the previous [incarnation’s] life task” and that his life is outside Tibet and “therefore my reincarnation will logically be found outside [the PRC].”¹⁸

“The enforcement of various inappropriate methods for recognising reincarnations to eradicate our unique Tibetan cultural traditions is doing damage that will be difficult to repair.”

He has also stated that the next Dalai Lama could possibly be a woman, remarking, “If a woman reveals herself as more useful the lama could very well be reincarnated in this form” and further stated that he will decide on the matter after close consultation with senior Tibetan religious heads, Tibetans, and other “concerned” people who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, “when he is about 90”.¹⁹

In 2018, the Dalai Lama again indicated that the traditional practice of finding an infant reincarnation of the Dalai Lama was by no means a certainty, saying that his successor could be “a high lama or high scholar,” or a person “around 20 years old.”²⁰

At the end of the 2011 document, the Dalai Lama states: “Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognised through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People’s Republic of China.”

Dharamsala’s framework for succession

At the 14th Tibetan Religious Conference in 2019, it was declared that “the karmic bond between the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan people has been inseparable” and that “all Tibetans genuinely wish for the continuation of the Institution and Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the future.”

The Tibetan people’s faith in and allegiance to the Dalai Lama is profound and can be evidenced through the continued call by Tibetans for his return as well as responses to statements from the Dalai Lama in exile. For example an overwhelming number of Tibetan self-immolation protesters²¹ have called for the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet, and following a statement from the Dalai Lama calling on Tibetans to stop using endangered animal furs, thousands of Tibetans across Tibet burned their valuable pelts.²²

The bond is not only based on the association of the Dalai Lama institution and the Tibetan people for over 400 years but also extends into the realm of spiritual belief and practice. In the minds of Tibetans China’s meddling in and choosing of the 15th Dalai Lama is simply unacceptable.

Consequently, a number of meetings that set a precedent for consultation among exiled Tibetans on the future of the Tibetan struggle and the institution of the Dalai Lama have been convened.

The first such meeting was held in 2008 and despite the dangers of communication with the outside world, some Tibetans from inside Tibet sent messages to the summit. One anonymous writer said: “While the Dalai Lama is with us we have resolve and wisdom. The Dalai Lama must himself affirm the process of reincarnation. It is only with the 14th Dalai Lama that this will have any prestige and legitimacy, preventing a period of vacuum in the reincarnation and the involvement of external forces.”

A further meeting in October 2019²³ brought together representatives of the exile administration with Tibetans from across the diaspora. The conference focused on “the relationship between the lineage of His Holiness the Dalai Lamas and Tibetan people” and asserted their rejection of China’s interference in any future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.²⁴

In November 2019, the 14th Tibetan Religious Conference was convened in Dharamsala to enable the participation of important Tibetan Buddhist figures. The meeting served as an opportunity for key figures to decide on significant Tibetan matters, including the discovery and recognition of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Attendees included leaders of major Tibetan Buddhist schools, heads and members of Tibetan monastic institutes, representatives of Tibetan nunneries as well as delegates from the Himalayan region.

The Conference unanimously passed the ‘Dharamshala Declaration’ that resolved, among other key points, that “The authority of decision concerning the way and the manner in which the next reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama should appear solely rests with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

“If I die as a refugee and the Tibetan situation remains like this, then logically, my reincarnation will appear in a free country.”

himself. No government or otherwise will have such authority. If the Government of the People’s Republic of China for political ends chooses a candidate for the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan people will not recognise and respect that candidate.”

In January 2021, the 13th Conference of Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the conference collectively adopted the Colombo Resolution-2021:

- “(i) To continue the Institution and Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the future;
- (ii) The incumbent 14th Dalai Lama to be the sole authority of how the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should return, and the Tibetan people never to recognise any Dalai Lama reincarnation candidate chosen and installed by the Chinese government; and
- (iii) To employ the eight centuries old unique Tibetan traditional method in searching and recognising the next Dalai Lama.”

Where and Why?

Two Dalai Lamas have been born outside what now constitutes Tibet. The fourth, Yonten Gyatso, was born to a descendent of Genghis Khan in Mongolia and the sixth, Tsangyang Gyatso, was born in Tawang in what is now the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang is also significant as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama sought initial refuge at Chuthangmo in the state following his dramatic escape from Tibet in March 1959.

Given these strong historic connections, and the Dalai Lama’s statement that “If I die as a refugee and the Tibetan situation remains like this, then logically, my reincarnation will appear in a free country,” there has been speculation that a 15th Dalai Lama could be born in one of the Himalayan areas where the 14th Dalai Lama visited and has spent time teaching.

This has historical precedent.

Visits by the 14th Dalai Lama to Mongolia and Arunachal Pradesh have served as a reminder to the PRC that their future control of the institution and outcomes is not in any way absolute. The Dalai Lama’s visits have also been perceived by some Buddhists as possible indicators of intention, consistent with the practice of some earlier Dalai Lamas of being reincarnated in places they had previously visited.

The people of the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas largely follow Tibetan Buddhism and hold deep respect for and faith in the Dalai Lama as their religious leader. Hundreds of reincarnate lamas live not only in Tibet but across the Himalayas in Nepal and in Sikkim, Ladakh, Himachal and Arunachal Pradesh in India, and some reside in Western countries. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of monks in Tibetan monasteries across India are by and large from these Himalayan regions.

In 2020, the Dalai Lama told a BBC interviewer that the matter of his reincarnation would be up to the “Himalayan Buddhists of Tibet and Mongolia.”²⁵

The Panchen Lama Precedent

Historically, the Panchen Lama has been one of Tibet's most revered religious figures, with a unique relationship to the Dalai Lama. Earlier Panchen Lamas played a role in the recognition and subsequent education of Dalai Lamas, and vice versa. It was the 5th Dalai Lama who recognised his teacher, Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen, as the 4th Panchen Lama. Subsequently, the 7th Dalai Lama recognised the 6th Panchen Lama who in turn recognised the 8th Dalai Lama.

Knowing this historical precedent, China's efforts to control reincarnation escalated in 1995 with the abduction of the six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, recognised by the present Dalai Lama. In his place, China installed its own candidate Gyaltsen Norbu. ²⁶

On 14 May 1995 Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. On 17 May, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family disappeared. A number of Tibetans who were associated with the search for the 11th Panchen Lama were arrested and sentenced, accused of leaking information to the Dalai Lama. Since then there has been no concrete evidence concerning Gedhun Choekyi Nyima or his family's well-being or whereabouts for over 20 years.

This was arguably the first indication of China's determination to strike at the heart of Tibetan Buddhist belief by appropriating the reincarnation system, particularly that of Panchen Lama.

China's public relations plan to promote Gyaltsen Norbu is key to the process to recognise and install their own Dalai Lama candidate. However, after nearly three decades, Gyaltsen Norbu has neither legitimacy nor recognition from the majority of Tibetans.

China's imposition of Gyaltsen Norbu as Panchen Lama was a clear break from its earlier, softer policy. For instance, China made no attempt to interfere in the process of the search and recognition of the 17th Karmapa, chosen by exile lamas and confirmed by the Dalai Lama. Beijing also officially 'recognised' him and allowed his enthronement in Tsurphu monastery.

Initially, the search for the 11th Panchen Lama began in a similar way. Chadrel Rinpoche, the former abbot of the Panchen Lama's traditional seat at Tashilhunpo, was allowed to head the search team. When a boy was identified according to traditional methods, the Chinese authorities permitted Chadrel Rinpoche to meet with the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup, in Beijing in July 1993 along with an official from the United Front Work Department.

However, in May 1995, when the 11th Panchen Lama was recognised by the Dalai Lama, Chadrel Rinpoche was arrested and in April 1997 he was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (left), Gyaltsen Norbu.



‘separatism’ and ‘leaking state secrets’. Since his arrest, his whereabouts and status have remained entirely unknown.²⁷ His assistant, Jampa Chungla, was sentenced to five years in 1996 and died in custody in November 2010.²⁸

Since the Panchen Lama’s enforced disappearance in 1995, the Chinese Government has refused repeated requests for independent access to establish his health, well-being and whereabouts, claiming he was leading a normal life and did not wish to be disturbed. China justified his disappearance on the grounds that it was for his own protection.

Chinese propaganda seeks to project Gyaltsen Norbu as being more important in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy than the Dalai Lama. For instance, a report in Xinhua in 2005 described him as “the highest ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism” and the “leader of Tibetan Buddhism”.²⁹

One of the Chinese scholarly papers highlights the strategic need for a communication and an “image creation” plan for Gyaltsen Norbu and raises concern that China “lacked a Tibetan spokesperson in an image that could compete with [the Dalai Lama]”, continuing that the ‘post Dalai era’ will be ‘our opportunity’ while acknowledging the inherent difficulties this will bring “because of the issue of the Dalai’s private recognition of the ‘Panchen’, image creation for the 11th Panchen Lama will not be an easy process.”

CCP strategies include:

- Attempts to challenge Western governments’ conceptions of Gyaltsen Norbu as a Chinese government ‘political tool’;
- Moulding Gyaltsen Norbu into a spokesman for Tibetans’ interests and a senior lama who promotes Buddhism, “not just a ‘mouthpiece’ for Love the Country, Love the Religion”³⁰
- Consolidating Gyaltsen Norbu’s position so he “can fill the ‘vanished idol’ role created by the West after the Dalai dies. There will be great difficulty in achieving this goal [...]”

Furthering this plan, the Chinese authorities have progressively raised Gyaltsen Norbu’s profile in secular as well as the religious sphere. He has been granted a number of political titles including:

- In 2010 Gyaltsen Norbu was appointed as Vice President of the Chinese Buddhist Association.
- In 2010, he was appointed to the Chinese People’s Consultative Conference, a rubber stamp body that endorses senior Party members’ decisions.³¹
- In 2019, Gyaltsen Norbu was elected president of the local Buddhist Association of China branch in the TAR. This is an important sub-division of the association, dedicated entirely to the control of Tibetan Buddhism and is known as the Work Commission on Tibetan Buddhism of the Buddhist Association of China.³²

Further to the usual monastic duties, which would be expected for such a figure, the strategic and political significance of Gyaltsen Norbu’s role can also be seen:

- Gyaltsen Norbu undertook an ‘inspection tour’ of monasteries and villages in the TAR in sensitive areas close to the Indian border, in 2019 and in July 2022.³³ Gyaltsen Norbu was briefed by the then TAR Party chief Wu Yingjie before his tour, and a report in the official press indicated that his role extends beyond religious activities to incorporate “research”.³⁴
- Gyaltsen Norbu has been photographed at the controversial Zam Hydropower station in Lhokha.³⁵ This was an unusual opportunity for a religious figure to indicate that he can play other roles such as highlighting how Tibet’s water on the world’s highest altitude plateau is regarded as a strategic asset by the PRC.³⁶

- In 2018 Gyaltzen Norbu visited the pilgrimage lake of Lhamo Lhatso³⁷ known as the ‘oracle lake’. This sacred site is connected both to the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, and to the recognition of his chosen Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima.³⁸
- In April 2012, Gyaltzen Norbu made his first appearance at the World Buddhist Forum outside the mainland in Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong the Chinese Panchen Lama visited a skull bone relic of the Buddha which Chinese archeologists had found in Jiangsu Province, as a part of Beijing’s efforts to bolster its claims of its Buddhist heritage.³⁹

The Communist Party’s endorsement at the highest level for Gyaltzen Norbu and his role in China’s future planning can be seen by his engagement with top CCP officials:

- On 10 June 2015, Gyaltzen Norbu was received at Zhongnanhai by Xi Jinping and three other members of the Politburo soon after a United Front Work Department meeting in Beijing on threats to the Party.⁴⁰
- In July 2011, Gyaltzen Norbu met the Chinese leader in Tibet, when Xi paid homage to the 10th Panchen Lama at Tashilhunpo Monastery by offering a khatag.
- In 2006, a maroon-robed Gyaltzen Norbu joined ranks of men in suits and other monks from 27 countries and regions for the Chinese-hosted ‘World Buddhist Forum’ in the eastern city of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The world’s most famous Buddhist, the Dalai Lama, was not invited to the gathering as the Chinese officials portrayed him as a dangerous ‘separatist’.⁴¹

Nevertheless, China’s efforts to raise Gyaltzen Norbu’s global profile in the secular, as well as the religious, sphere suffered a setback in May 2022 when he was refused permission to visit the Buddha’s birthplace in Lumbini in Nepal. The Nepalese government reportedly withdrew permission after both the US embassy in Kathmandu and the Indian government expressed alarm.⁴² This would have been Gyaltzen Norbu’s second visit outside China.⁴³

Instead, on 16 May 2022, Narendra Modi visited Lumbini coinciding with Buddha Jayanti Day, a festival commemorating the birth of the Buddha. Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the small pilgrimage town close to India’s border, which is an indication of India’s intentions to wield influence in the region.

China’s New Strategies on Reincarnation

China’s destruction of Buddhism predates its invasion of Tibet. When the Red Army marched through eastern Tibet during the Long March in 1935, they destroyed many monasteries and confiscated grains, leading to famine. After 1959, China unleashed one campaign after another, including the so-called ‘Democratic Reform’ and the Cultural Revolution during which nearly all monasteries were destroyed.

Since 1994 China’s crackdown on religion in Tibet became more systematic when it imposed a series of restrictive measures, including limiting the numbers of monks and nuns, banning Dalai Lama photographs, and initiating vitriolic campaigns against the religious leader. Those measures have, however, not fully succeeded in eradicating Tibetan devotion or determination to protect and preserve their religious identity.

However, the abduction of the Dalai Lama’s choice of Panchen Lama marked a yet more aggressive and consistent approach towards controlling the selection, installation and education of reincarnate lamas as a means to strengthen the Chinese government as the arbiter of Tibetan Buddhist culture. In the decades that followed, the Chinese authorities implemented a series of severe measures designed to further consolidate Beijing’s control over the Tibetan reincarnation system, including Order No. 5 and setting up an official reincarnate lama database subject to CCP approval.

Order No. 5, or “Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism”, was passed by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) for implementation from 1 September 2007.⁴⁴ This marked the first step of the Party’s ‘management’ and ‘regulation’ of reincarnation through legal means. The law stipulates a ban on searching for and recognising a ‘tulku’ by ‘unauthorised’ groups and individuals, stipulating that “Reincarnating living Buddhas shall not be interfered with or be under the dominion of any foreign organisation or individual” (Article Two). This also means that ‘living Buddhas’ must forfeit their status as a tulku if they leave the PRC, according to the law. This could serve to question the validity of Buddhist lineages outside the borders of the PRC if Beijing endeavours to do so.

Order No. 5 decreed that reincarnations of ‘living Buddhas’ who do not have government approval are “illegal or invalid”, which is intended to convey that the Tibetan system of recognising and educating reincarnate lamas is no longer relevant because it is the Chinese government that decides whether reincarnation is a legitimate religious figure or not. China even backdated the measures to apply to tulkus who were recognised years before 2007 by authentic Tibetan religious means.

The Dalai Lama was not specifically named in Order No. 5. But official language on reincarnation has become much more blunt and aggressive in blaming the Dalai Lama emerging from an acute awareness of his continued influence and a political imperative to supplant him, particularly since the wave of self-immolations that swept across Tibet from 2009 onwards.

In 2019, for instance, the pro-Beijing newspaper Global Times reported that “reincarnation, written in government regulations and embedded in Tibetan Buddhism, will be carried out properly and not affected by any individual or the ‘Dalai Lama’s separatist clique’”.⁴⁵

The more systematic approach does not only seek to prevent any involvement of the Dalai Lama in his own reincarnation, but also to shut down any possibility of a return to his homeland. This is agonizing for Tibetans in Tibet; the overwhelming call of those who risked their lives to peacefully demonstrate in the protests of 2008 was for the Dalai Lama to return home.

In 2016, the Chinese authorities announced that they had completed a “Living Buddha database with biographies of over 1,300 Living Buddhas residing in the country”. Zhu Weiqun, Party ideologue and former interlocutor for the United Front Work Department with the Dalai Lama’s envoys, said the intention of this database was to “strike a heavy blow to the Dalai Lama, as he has been utilizing his religious status to ratify Living Buddhas at will – which is against religious tradition – in an attempt to control Tibetan monasteries and divide the country.”⁴⁶

The Chinese state media said that the online registration system contains the profiles of 1,311 individuals approved by the state “as reincarnated Buddhas”.⁴⁷ Subsequent regional databases have been launched by provincial authorities, including in TAR.

The latest Chinese government White Paper released in May 2022 confirmed that in the TAR, “92 reincarnated Living Buddhas had been identified and approved through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions” (meaning they had been identified officially, although not through traditional means).^{48 49}

The focus on controlling reincarnate lamas is an indication of the political difficulties faced by the authorities following their failure to secure the allegiance of some senior reincarnate lamas in Tibet in recent years.

The 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, recognised by Tibetan lamas, approved by Beijing and confirmed by the Dalai Lama, was being groomed by the Chinese as a ‘patriotic’ figurehead. However, in 1999 he escaped from Tibet and is now living in exile. Arjia Rinpoche, then the abbot of Kumbum Monastery in Amdo, who also held several official positions, defected to the US in 1998 after Beijing sought his endorsement of China’s Panchen Lama. Both made statements afterward about the lack of genuine religious freedom in Tibet.⁵⁰

In December 2016, the Central Party Committee agreed to establish the Communist Party's control over the management of all the higher-level Tibetan Buddhist institutes across China.⁵¹ Two years later in 2018, it was announced that 200 Communist Party cadres and lay officials were taking over all management, finances, security, admissions, and even the choice of textbooks at the major Buddhist institute of Larung Gar, following demolitions and expulsions of thousands of monks and nuns in previous years.⁵²

Traditionally, it has always been the lamas, khenpos, geshe and other senior religious leaders who have managed the affairs of monasteries, nunneries and other Buddhist learning centres. The religious leaders made decisions concerning monks' study, training, meditation, retreat and, of course, search and recognition of reincarnations within their domains.

China systematically plans to upend this centuries-old practice.

The CCP's hardline strategy toward controlling the Tibetan reincarnation system can also be evidenced in the new posting of TAR Party Secretary Wang Junzheng. Wang, who is one of a handful of Chinese leaders to be sanctioned by the US, UK, the European Union and Canada,⁵³ was previously head of security of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (East Turkistan) where he presided over 're education' camps across the region involving mass arrests, torture, and rape.⁵⁴

One of his first engagements in Tibet in 2021 was a meeting with 'official' Beijing recognised tulku in Lhasa, during which Wang emphasised China's control over reincarnations.⁵⁵

New strategies for reincarnation developed by China include:

- Intensified political education and indoctrination extended to ordinary Tibetans, including in strategically significant areas close to India's border.
- The cultivation of senior religious and secular figures loyal to the Party. These figures are seen as central to efforts to install and endorse China's own chosen Dalai Lama candidate.
- Training of young incarnate lamas detailed on an official CCP database in a network of government-run institutes.⁵⁶
- Substituting religious pilgrimages for supervised tours to 'red' sites such as to Mao Zedong's birthplace or military bases.⁵⁷
- The 'Four Standards' campaign, which has been enforced in monasteries since 2018, involves the requirement of religious practitioners to be loyal to the Communist Party and "dependable at critical moments". Monks are also instructed to promote government-approved methods of recognising reincarnation. The campaign underpins the CCP's ideological and quasi-legal efforts to secure broad endorsement of their choice of the next Dalai Lama and any other reincarnate lama.

With its pseudo-legal measures such as the Order No. 5, the Communist Party has plans to annul and invalidate the Tibetan Buddhist system of recognising reincarnations. Should any religious figure go against these measures of escalated control, they are subjected to imprisonment, torture, and even death. In 2020 a monk in Nagchu (Ch: Naqu) was tortured and died after being found to have a picture on his phone of a young boy recognised as a reincarnate lama by the 14th Dalai Lama in India.⁵⁸ Another religious leader in his eighties, Tulku Dawa, was sentenced to seven years in prison and his death hushed up after he was suspected of communicating with the Dalai Lama over a reincarnation in his monastery.⁵⁹

Training Programmes: A Tool to Legitimize Party Interference

China's control over the Tibetan reincarnation process is focused on "safeguarding the reunification of the motherland, and the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism to socialism"⁶⁰ as well as "conveying the Party's ideology and propaganda to grassroots society."

Examples of China's tulku training programmes include:

- In May 2020, more than 100 'living Buddhas' and Party cadres stationed in their monasteries underwent a nine-day training on religious policy and "reincarnation management". A few years earlier in November 2016, at the closing ceremony of the training course for "newly reincarnated living Buddhas in Tibet" organised by the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee and TAR Party Committee, Zhu Weiqun⁶¹ said, "The significance of the Living Buddha Training Class should be understood from the perspective of history, from the perspective of government management of Tibetan Buddhism, from the perspective of maintaining the unity of the motherland, and from the perspective of adapting Tibetan Buddhism to socialism."⁶²
- The United Front Work Department in Sichuan hosted an exhibition of 'living Buddhas' in September 2020 and announced it had trained more than 439 Party-approved reincarnations in the province.⁶³
- Party cadres are also trained in the Communist Party's approach to reincarnation. This took place in February 2021, when cadres and workers were compelled to attend study sessions in Gyalthang (rebranded by the authorities as Shangri La city) in Dechen, Kham (Chinese: Deqing, Yunnan Province).⁶⁴

Officials who could identify a 15th Dalai Lama in the People's Republic of China

On its official reincarnate lama database, China makes a distinction between 'ordinary' tulkus (who are approved by the religious affairs departments of provinces and autonomous regions) and those "with greater influence", who are required to report to the State Administration of Religious Affairs. There is another category of "Living Buddhas with particularly significant influence" (which is not defined), who must also report to the State Council.⁶⁵

In May 2021, a Chinese White Paper stated that "currently more than 600 religious figures serve as deputies or members of people's congresses and political consultative conferences at various levels."⁶⁶ A high number of these religious figures are likely to be officially designated 'Living Buddhas'.

In Qinghai in 2021, 35 members of the Qinghai Chinese People's Consultative Committee (CPPCC) came from the religious community, including 10 'Living Buddhas'.⁶⁷ In Sichuan, CPPCC members in 2021 included seven tulkus and one abbot from Yachen Gar, the religious institute in Kham, where thousands of nuns and monks were expelled and their homes demolished.⁶⁸ CPPCC members in 2021 from Gansu province included five 'Living Buddhas'.⁶⁹

State-chosen 'Living Buddhas' are also used by China for international diplomacy. For instance, a high-level delegation led by Shingtsa Tenzin Chudrak, Deputy Director of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region and a 'reincarnation of living Buddha', travelled to the United States to push a pro-Beijing message on the Dalai Lama in 2015.⁷⁰

Many of these individuals are associated with institutes or monasteries in strategically significant areas, such as Chamdo, Kham (Ch: Qamdo, TAR). The Communist authorities gained control of central Tibet when Chamdo fell to the People's Liberation Army after tough resistance in October 1950. Chamdo has been under heavy crackdown since mass protests in March 2008 followed by a dramatic tightening of security in the area and the imposition of "emergency" measures that include a "readiness to defend to the death key sites, key aims, and key areas at sensitive and highly critical periods."⁷¹

In the buildup to the 70th anniversary of the Party's National Day on 1 October 2019, the Chinese state media broadcast footage of monks at Jampa Ling Monastery in Chamdo hanging khatags on giant images of Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong. There is speculation that the Chinese authorities may choose such monasteries, perceived by many Tibetans as China's right hand, as the base of its future Dalai Lama candidate. See Appendix Individual Roles in China's Dalai Lama Succession.

Strategic Control over Tibetan Buddhism

The new, tougher phase in China's broader efforts to control Tibet by replacing loyalty to the Dalai Lama with allegiance to Party policy is evident in a number of disturbing developments in the religious sphere. Signalling its objective to replace monastic education with secular schooling that emphasizes Communist Party propaganda – thus implanting the 'red gene' in a younger generation – novice monks are being compelled to leave monastic schools for a secular education.

Traditionally in Tibet, monks entered monasteries which are important centres of culture and education at a young age. While Communist Party work teams first began preventing young monks from joining monasteries in the mid-1990s, the level of enforcement has varied from monastery to monastery. Today efforts to forcefully enrol young monks into government-run schools are spreading in Tibet, including in Qinghai and Sichuan.⁷²

This matters because in Tibetan monasteries, monks are raised to be protectors of their own culture and Buddhist values from a young age. When they grow up, they pass on their education to other monks. When novice monks are forced to leave the monasteries, this vital connection between generations is broken.

China has also adopted new measures as part of its strategy to undermine and supplant the Tibetan religious hierarchy and weaken the authority of legitimate Tibetan religious leaders both inside and outside Tibet.

The traditional Tibetan Buddhist 'Geshe' degree, the highest form of Buddhist scholarship, has been replaced with a Chinese-approved Geshe qualification. This is accompanied by tighter restrictions on Tibetan teachers who have studied in India and are highly valued for their knowledge and practice, particularly as they have had the opportunity to study and attend teachings by the Dalai Lama. These monks have long been unable to teach in monasteries in the TAR because they are perceived to have been "wrongly educated in India".⁷³

In 2012, the then TAR Party chief Chen Quanguo further tightened restrictions when he launched a systematic surveillance operation over Tibetans visiting Bodhi Gaya in India – where the Buddha attained enlightenment – for the first time. It was the harshest extraterritorial crackdown on the Dalai Lama's activities in exile following a trend of increasingly hardline measures targeting continued devotion to him within Tibet.⁷⁴

Hundreds of Tibetans 'disappeared' upon their return to Tibet and held for long periods for 're-education' in military camps and other facilities. Elderly couples were separated and denied medication, and young Tibetans who had spent life savings on the journey were then charged fees for their period in enforced 're-education'. Some families did not know about the whereabouts of their loved ones for weeks or months. It later transpired that they had been held in military camps or other locations such as schools repurposed as 're-education centres'.

In July 2014, when the Dalai Lama conferred teachings in Ladakh, the Chinese state described them as an incitement to 'hatred' and 'extremist action'.

In 2017, thousands of Tibetan pilgrims were compelled by the Chinese authorities to return to Tibet after travelling to India to attend a major teaching by the Dalai Lama. China's move followed more systematic measures in Tibet to prevent Tibetans travelling out of the country.⁷⁵ Several hundred

Tibetans who had reached Dharamsala before attending the teachings were able to receive audiences with the Dalai Lama, but many others were unable to do so. One Tibetan said, “Tibetan pilgrims were sobbing and holding onto each other, heartbroken to be forced to leave before His Holiness even arrived.”⁷⁶

Projecting “Sinicization” Across the Himalayas and Beyond

Mindful of the Dalai Lama’s global popularity, particularly in the Himalayan regions and the spread across the world, China has taken active steps to promote Buddhism ‘with Chinese characteristics’ even as it pursues destructive policies to eliminate Tibetan religious identity as well as other faiths.⁷⁷

Buddhism has been deployed as a tool in Xi Jinping’s quest to achieve political objectives of supremacy in geopolitical, military and territorial issues. Sacred locations, including the Buddha’s birthplace in Nepal and other pilgrimage sites in India have become contested areas where China seeks to project its political agenda of ‘Sinicization’ to undermine the 14th Dalai Lama and win support for their own future candidate.

In recent years tensions have escalated with India, particularly along the border with Tibet. China has claimed Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory describing the Indian state as ‘South Tibet’ and referring to its ownership of the Sixth Dalai Lama’s hometown.

For more than a decade, China has increased incursions into Indian and Bhutanese territory along the border. In June 2020, troops clashed in the Galwan Valley, resulting in the death of 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers. This was the deadliest face-off between the two nuclear-armed nations on either side of the high-altitude border in the last five decades.

As a result, China is expanding its extra-territorial reach across the Himalayas as it seeks to undermine the Dalai Lama’s influence in the region and weaken the exiled Tibetan community living on the subcontinent. China has repurposed a centuries-old engagement between China and India – involving Indian interpreters visiting China and Chinese pilgrims visiting Buddhist sites in India – into a political battleground.

The construction of the several clusters of “model ‘*xiaokang*’ (well-off) border defence villages”, including two that have been built within the last two years correlates with two places that saw fighting in 1962 Sino-Indian War – Tsona opposite Tawang and Dzayul opposite Walong in Arunachal Pradesh.

In 2014 China incorporated Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory on a new map published soon after Narendra Modi’s takeover as Indian Prime Minister.⁷⁸ On the eve of a new Chinese Land Border Law taking effect in December 2021, China announced that it had standardised in Tibetan and Chinese characters the names of 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls ‘Zangnan’⁷⁹ (South Tibet).

When Xi Jinping made his statement about securing the borders and its connection to China’s national security, he was sending a key signal of intent. Historian and author Matthew Akester said that the next stage of consolidation in Tibet “would be to build up the border and thus to step up pressure on India. [...] Arguably this has echoes of [...] the 1962 war – the perception on the Chinese side of the dual need both to stabilize Tibet and to mount an aggressive posture on the border towards India, to cope with any opposition or threat, and ultimately to exercise regional dominance.”⁸⁰

Buddhism has been deployed as a tool in Xi Jinping’s quest to achieve political objectives.

In response to the Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang for religious teachings in 2017, China's Foreign Ministry warned that this would "gravely damage the peace and stability of the border regions between China and India, and China-India relations." It added that by inviting the Dalai Lama to an area where China and India had territorial disputes, the Indian side had "violated its commitment on Tibet-related issues, and escalated the boundary dispute."^{81 82}

This underlines the connection between the India-China border issue and the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. For China to stake a claim over Tawang means to reinforce its claim over Tibet. However, "For China, the McMahon Line that was born out of the Simla Agreement of 1914 and signed between the Tibetans and British India is a colonial legacy that does not hold any legitimacy," says Tibetan analyst Tshering Chonzom Bhutia. "Further, to recognise the McMahon Line would have serious implications for China's claim to Tibet as an 'inalienable part of China' and in effect, delegitimize its 'liberation' of the region in 1950."⁸³

Mongolia's Role in the Survival of Tibetan Buddhism and Dalai Lamas' succession

Mongolia is the largest free country with Tibetan Buddhism as the main religion. With a population of more than 10 million Mongols living in Eurasia, there are more Tibetan Buddhists in the country than anywhere else in the world, including in Tibet.

Mongolia holds a pivotal role in any future succession for two key reasons:

- One of the only two Dalai Lamas from outside Tibet was born in Mongolia;
- The authority to identify incarnations of Mongolia's spiritual leader, the Jetsun Dhampa Khutuktu (Bogd Khan), has historically involved the Dalai Lama.

In 2016 the 14th Dalai Lama announced the recognition of the 10th Jetsun Dhampa had been born in Mongolia. Prior to the 9th Jetsun Dhampa's demise he left a testament saying that he would be reborn in Mongolia, and that his reincarnation would be recognised only by the Dalai Lama "who is my root guru in all my births".⁸⁴ The recognition upheld Tibetan Buddhist tradition and countered China's efforts to interfere with their own selection process as a 'rehearsal' for the succession of the Dalai Lama outside China.

According to unofficial sources in Mongolia, on the night the 9th Jetsun Dhampa passed away, the first delegation to visit to "express condolences" were from the Chinese Embassy. An informed Tibetan source says that the Chinese delegates also conveyed the message that the reincarnation of the spiritual leader should not be decided by the Dalai Lama. According to the same source, the Chinese authorities may have the intention to install their own Bogd Khan candidate within China when the child recognised by the Dalai Lama is named.

In November 2016, the Dalai Lama went on a five-day visit to Ulaanbaatar and, following his trip, he told a press conference: "It is very clear that the reincarnation is now in Mongolia."⁸⁵ However the Dalai Lama did not publicly reveal the reincarnation's identity saying that the child needs to undergo several years of preparation. Little or no information has since been disclosed over the process⁸⁶ and the child has not been named in the context of the pressures on Mongolia's fragile democracy by its powerful neighbour China. In addition to the obvious sensitivities of the political situation, it is consistent with the Dalai Lama's caution over identifying a 'tulku' publicly until the child reveals the appropriate qualities.

China implements numerous strategies to coerce and advance its interests in land-locked Mongolia, which is highly dependent on China and Russia for resources.⁸⁷ In 2016 China responded to the Dalai Lama's visit and his involvement in the identification of the 10th Jetsun Dhampa by cancelling a proposed \$4.2 billion loan to Mongolia, which was a setback to Mongolians seeking to build closer

ties with Beijing. China has also intensified its propaganda on Tibet in Mongolia⁸⁸ reflecting their resentment with the Dalai Lama's engagement.

The Mongolian Foreign Minister said in December 2016 that reincarnation was a matter for the religious establishment and that it did not require "any outside influence or involvement".⁸⁹ Further still the Mongolian media stated that the 10th reincarnation would be enthroned by Mongolian lamas, who would also be responsible for the child's education.⁹⁰

In India's diplomacy with Mongolia, Buddhism has always been an important element, and India played a significant role in protecting Buddhism and facilitating connections with the Dalai Lama during the Communist era. In May 2015, Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Mongolia, where he emphasized Mongolia's shared Buddhist connection, making a symbolic presentation at the Gandantegchinlen Monastery of a sapling of the bodhi tree from Bodhi Gaya, where the Buddha achieved enlightenment.

However, economic influence including vast loans via Xi Jinping's 'Belt and Road Initiative' have pushed Mongolia into major indebtedness to China.⁹¹ These debts are further exacerbated by a programme of cultural propaganda such as the establishment of Confucius Institutes, television and radio broadcasts and cultural centres.

In a troubling recent development, well-known Mongolian writer, journalist, and human rights activist, Munkhbayar, a firm opponent of the country's close connection with China, was arrested in March 2022. Munkhbayar had organised seminars, and activities to protest China's human rights violations, and had also called for Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene to resign because of his alleged close ties with China.⁹²

Pro-China Group used to Undermine the Dalai Lama

Anti-Dalai Lama protests in the West

From around 1996-7, members of a sectarian group called the International Shugden Community – which some of its former practitioners describe as a cult – hounded the Dalai Lama wherever he travelled, staging noisy and aggressive demonstrations at his teachings in the US, Australia and Europe.⁹³

Police in various countries established that a group of people belonging to the Shugden Community, both Westerners and Tibetans, had been effectively 'stalking' the Dalai Lama in his travels, and seeking to check in at the same hotels and find entry and exit points at venues.

In 2016 the International Shugden Community called off the demonstrations and disbanded after an expose by Reuters revealed that the sect was backed by the Communist Party.⁹⁴ An internal Communist Party document distributed to Chinese officials in 2014. The internal document described the Shugden issue as "an important front in our struggle with the Dalai clique."⁹⁵

A Tibetan monk named Lama Tseta, who was prominent in the Shugden organisation in Delhi and who later became a whistleblower, said: "The Chinese are using them [Shugden followers] as a tool to make the Dalai Lama look fake, to achieve their own ends, to undermine Tibetan Buddhism and to fragment Tibetan society."⁹⁶

Beijing has further drawn upon long-term tactics inside Tibet by promoting the propitiation of Shugden as part of a systematic ideological and political campaign to undermine the Dalai Lama. Chinese officials persuade Tibetans to propitiate Shugden using financial inducements.⁹⁷

In some cases, small monasteries connected to Shugden have had large amounts of funding from the Chinese government compared to larger monasteries with a higher population of monks where

“The Chinese are using them [Shugden followers] as a tool to make the Dalai Lama look fake, to achieve their own ends, to undermine Tibetan Buddhism and to fragment Tibetan society.”

Shugden is not propitiated. Furthermore, Shugden statues have been widely installed in monasteries in different parts of Tibet, often against the will of resident monks.

This strategy represents one of the key elements of Beijing’s policies aimed at splitting both the religious and lay communities along this sectarian line.

As China tightens its control over the reincarnation process both inside Tibet and outside the People’s Republic, the Shugden group has intensified its activities in Mongolia, altering Mongolian politics and serving as a front for Chinese political and business interests.

In India, China has used Shugden loyalists in their expansion of influence, seeking to cultivate loyalties in specific monasteries which may be called upon to endorse China’s Dalai Lama candidate in the future.

Indian analysts note the possibility, even likelihood, of a Chinese Dalai Lama emerging from the ranks of Shugden followers. They also point to the danger of some exile-based senior lineage holders remaining neutral, which will be beneficial to the Chinese authorities.

One such figure aligned with the Shugden movement is India-based Kundeling, known as ‘Nga Lama’ among Tibetans, meaning ‘me lama’, a reference to his self-proclaimed status though he was not formally recognised as the reincarnation of Kundeling Rinpoche.

At the height of the devastating crackdown on protests across Tibet in 2008, Shugden supporters held a press conference at which ‘Nga Lama’ described the Dalai Lama as a “pawn of U.S. intelligence”. This provided a useful endorsement to Beijing’s political struggle against the Dalai Lama at a time when Tibetans around the world were protesting against the Beijing Olympics, and mourning Tibetans killed by security forces across the plateau.

Securitization in Nepal

China’s securitization of Tibet, based on equating control of Tibet with the ‘national security’ of the entire country, has been extended to Nepal with its centuries-old religious, cultural, and trade connections. With its rich Buddhist heritage, including the Boudhanath stupa, the birthplace of Buddha at Lumbini, its ancient temples and caves where Tibetan yogis meditated, Nepal now has become a locus for the PRC’s transnational repression of Tibetans.

Beijing’s efforts to control Nepal have been evident particularly since Nepal formally joined the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ in 2017, a membership that came with promises of millions of dollars of Chinese investment in Nepalese infrastructure and projects.⁹⁸

In 2019, a visit by Xi Jinping to Kathmandu sealed formal ties, and news even emerged of the export of ‘Xi Jinping thought’ to the Nepalese people under the previous unified Nepal Communist Party government. It was reported that Nepalese officials and leaders, including former Prime Minister Oli, were treated to ‘education’ on the pronouncements of the Chinese supreme leader, sparking deep unease about the nation’s sovereignty and judicial independence.⁹⁹

The direct correlation between the deepening investment and aid from China and the vulnerabilities of Tibetans in Nepal has long been acknowledged by Beijing, which has described its investment as a reward to Nepal for its “important role in guarding against Tibetan separatists”.¹⁰⁰

In the past China has pressured the Nepalese government to delegitimize the Tibetan community in Nepal. Beginning in 1994, Nepal stopped issuing or renewing refugee identification cards for Tibetans, and the Office of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan welfare office were forced to close in 2005. For many years peaceful protests by Tibetans were shut down by the Nepalese authorities, and cultural and religious gatherings labelled as ‘anti-Chinese’ and banned.¹⁰¹

With the election of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in 2021, there appears to have been a loosening of restrictions on Tibetan gatherings, including most recently for the Dalai Lama’s birthday on 6 July 2022.¹⁰²

The question of appropriate international response to the escalation of China’s assault on the right to religious freedom in Tibet arises at a moment when the PRC is increasingly extending its transnational repression beyond its borders.

Generating an International Response

It is crucial for world governments to develop much stronger preparedness and multilateral coordination to anticipate what is to come.

Developing legislation to affirm that the Dalai Lama’s succession is strictly a matter for Tibetans, the Tibetan Buddhist community and particularly that of the Dalai Lama and his office of the Gaden Phodrang Trust. Clear opposition to China’s interference in the succession process is urgently required.¹⁰³

In order to do so effectively, each country must first determine that the matter of the Dalai Lama’s succession and recognition of a legitimate Tibetan-chosen Dalai Lama is a matter of global importance and ties directly to the very survival of Tibet’s religious and cultural heritage.

The Dalai Lama’s authority over his own succession and the future of Tibetan Buddhism is increasingly recognised and publicly affirmed by governments.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: The issue has been elevated in the US with the Tibet Policy and Support Act (December 2020) stating that the role of deciding the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation belongs to the Tibetan Buddhist system, the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders, and not to any government.

The Tibet Policy and Support Act makes it official US policy to hold that the Dalai Lama’s succession is a strictly religious matter that can only be decided upon by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community.¹⁰⁴ Under the Act, if Chinese leaders attempt to identify a future Dalai Lama, they will face sanctions that could include having their assets frozen and their entry to the US denied. The State Department is also tasked to work with like-minded countries worldwide to push back against China’s plans to install its own imposter Dalai Lama. The legislation strengthens the landmark Tibetan Policy Act of 2002.¹⁰⁵

Two bills passed in the US Congress and Senate in February 2022 and July 2021 respectively reaffirm US policy regarding the Dalai Lama’s succession or reincarnation as well as the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists. Under Sec 3307 of the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, the bill reaffirms that any “interference by the Government of the People’s Republic of China or any other government in the process of recognising a successor or reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama and any future Dalai Lamas would represent a clear abuse of the right to religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people”.

EUROPEAN UNION: While no European member state has developed similar legislation yet, the EU has reaffirmed its position that China should respect the 14th Dalai Lama's succession in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist tradition.¹⁰⁶

In a written response to a question from several Members of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell, the EU Foreign Affairs Chief and Vice President of the European Commission, stated: "The European Union has consistently indicated that it expects China to respect the Dalai Lama's succession, in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist standards. This position was also recalled at the previous meeting on 1 April 2019. The European Union will continue to express its position on this issue."¹⁰⁷

EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief state that communities have the right to perform "acts integral to the conduct by religious groups of their basic affairs. These rights include but are not limited to, legal personality and non-interference in internal affairs, including the right (...) to select and train leaders (...)"¹⁰⁸

BELGIUM: In January 2020 the Foreign Affairs Ministries of Belgium also affirmed that it is up to the Tibetan religious community to select the future Dalai Lama, rejecting China's efforts. The Belgian Foreign Affairs and Defense Minister Philippe Goffin said: "It is logically up to the Tibetan religious community to designate his successor without interference from the temporal authorities."¹⁰⁹

NETHERLANDS: Similarly, in an official letter from late 2019 the Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Stef Blok said, "The position of this cabinet is that it is up to the Tibetan religious community itself to appoint a future successor to the Dalai Lama."¹¹⁰

GERMANY: In March 2020, Germany's Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Niels Annen, released a statement saying, "The Federal Government is of the opinion that religious communities may regulate their affairs autonomously." Annen added: "This includes the right to determine their religious leaders themselves".¹¹¹

INDIA: Indian commentators highlight the importance of India's stand on the Dalai Lama and Tibet in the context of several factors: India's large exiled Tibetan population, the revitalization of its Buddhist heritage,¹¹² and India's efforts to stabilize the border conflict with China.

Citing Indian Prime Minister Modi's public greetings to the Dalai Lama on his birthday in 2022 and 2021¹¹³ a number of analysts point to the need for an urgent review of India's policy and advocate for India to be more outspoken on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Dalai Lama's succession.

Recommendations to Governments:

- Develop legislation – such as the US Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020¹¹⁴ – which recognises that the identification and installation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including any future Dalai Lama, be left solely to Tibetan Buddhists to decide, without interference from the Chinese government.
- Develop a public position to affirm support for the 14th Dalai Lama as the legitimate authority on his succession and oppose any effort by the Government of the People’s Republic of China to select and appoint Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders.
- Take robust coordinated action with like-minded governments to adopt resolutions and joint statements in multilateral fora, recognising the selection of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders is to be determined solely by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community, in accordance with international human rights law.
- Urge the Chinese authorities to immediately amend or repeal the Religious Affairs Regulations of 2017, including Article 36 which requires that the succession of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism is approved by the CCP.
- Repeal or amend all other laws and policies which violate the Tibetan people’s right to freedom of religion or belief, including the “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism” which require Chinese state approval for Tibetan Buddhist reincarnations and declare any recognition outside China as illegal in an effort invalidate reincarnation lineages.
- Urge the Chinese authorities to provide proof of the whereabouts and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, and call for an independent monitor to be given immediate access to corroborate his situation and the extent to which he is able to enjoy and exercise his rights.
- Refuse to endorse China’s candidate of Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu.
- Establish a Special Coordinator for Tibet, high level Tibet Policy Advisor, Tibet Liaison Officer or Tibet desk in order to meaningfully respond to the urgent situation in Tibet.
- Offer bilateral support to the Government of India on the matter of the Dalai Lama’s succession and protection of the CTA and Tibetan cultural and religious institutions in India.
- Develop a position supporting Mongolia and protecting its democracy, its Buddhist institutions and its spiritual leader Jetsun Dhampa Khutuktu from outside interference.
- Urge the Chinese authorities to immediately ratify the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
- Urge the Chinese authorities to grant immediate, meaningful, and unfettered access to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- Reaffirm the right to freedom of expression for the Tibetan people, including peaceful advocacy of their right to self-determination.
- Leverage Member State influence to pressure the Chinese authorities to end the arbitrary arrests, prosecution, torture and all other violations systematically carried out against Tibetan religious figures, critics, activists, human rights defenders and all those peacefully exercising their cultural and religious rights.

Appendix

Individual Roles in China's Dalai Lama Succession

The following individuals - identified by historian Claude Arpi - are likely to play a role, whether key or minor, in any future succession process, for instance in endorsing a candidate or publicly supporting the process. The Chinese Panchen Lama Gyaltsen Norbu is not included in the list below as his role in the succession issue is covered elsewhere in this paper.¹¹⁵

Sonam Phuntsog, the 7th Reting Rinpoche:

In 2000 monks at Reting Monastery protested¹¹⁶ when China enthroned Sonam Phuntsog as the 7th Reting reincarnation. The 14th Dalai Lama neither approved nor endorsed China's choice.

The Reting Rinpoche is one of the high-ranking incarnations empowered to manage Tibet during the absence or minority of the Dalai Lamas. Previous Reting incarnations have also recognised other incarnate lamas, notably the 9th Jetsun Dhampa, the spiritual patriarch of Mongolia in 1933.

The 5th Reting Rinpoche acted as regent of Tibet following the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, and he played a leading role in the search for the 14th Dalai Lama.

Given the close historical relationship between the Reting Rinpoche and the Dalai Lama, and the incarnation's symbolic importance, the China-installed Reting is likely to be called upon to take a symbolically important political role in any succession process.

In January 2013, China made the current Reting the youngest member of Tibet's CPPCC. Following this, the teenager told China Daily that he would "keep the Reting lineage of patriotism and the love for the religion".¹¹⁷ At a meeting in January 2022, he emphasised the importance of Sinicization and spoke about "guiding the majority of monks to effectively build Chinese national consciousness."¹¹⁸

Amchok (Achok) Rinpoche

Amchok Rinpoche, a former senior member of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile returned to Tibet in 2015 and announced he had become a Chinese citizen.

Born in 1944, he escaped into exile in 1959 and worked as the Director of the Dharamsala-based Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.¹¹⁹ He first went back to China in 1982 as part of an effort by the United Front Work Department to engage with exiled Tibetans, a state media website said. After returning in 2015, the state-run newspaper *The Global Times* announced that by doing so he had 'snubbed' the Dalai Lama. Tibetans understand that Amchok Rinpoche's return means no such thing, and that he and others who make the decision to return home can play an important role in religious and cultural continuity.¹²⁰

In 1987, Amchok Rinpoche lived and taught for a year at the institute for reincarnate lamas in Beijing that had been founded by the 10th Panchen Lama.

Phagpalha Gelek Namgyal

As the reincarnation of the head lama of the Jampaling Monastery, Phagpalha was one of the first Tibetans to join the Communist Party soon after China invaded Tibet. He is one of the senior members of the 'Chamdo Clique' and is also known as Chamdo Phagpalha.

Phagpalha is the Vice Chairman of 13th CPPCC National Committee and is also honorary president of the Buddhist Association of China as well as the chairman of the CPPCC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee. He was born in February 1940 in Lithang (Chi: Litang) in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province.

Other leading officials from Chamdo include Lobsang Gyaltzen, the head of the TAR Government and a member of the Central Committee, Jampa Phuntsok, a Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress, and Pema Choling (Padma Choling) the Chairman of the TAR People's Congress and the only ethnic Tibetan who was a full member in the 18th CCP's Central Committee.

According to historian and analyst Claude Arpi, Phagpala, Jampa Phuntsok, and Padma Choling are rumoured to support Shugden, a spirit the Dalai Lama has warned against.¹²¹

Drupkhang Thubten Khedrup

(Rendered in Chinese as Trukang Thupden Keldro or Zhukang Tubdankezhub)

He heads the institute for training tulkus in Lhasa and has been a prominent critic of the Dalai Lama.

Born in 1955 in Nagchu, U-Tsang (Chinese: Naqu, TAR), he holds a number of official positions, including Vice Chairman of the TAR's Political Consultative Conference and Vice Chair of the Buddhist Association of China.

Drupkhang Thubten Khedrup was present at a meeting in the buildup to celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Communist Party in 2019 which stressed the need for not only monks but all Tibetans "to consciously draw a clear line with the 14th Dalai Lama and the Dalai clique and resolutely resist the various activities of the Dalai clique."

Lhodro Gyatso Rinpoche

(Rendered in Chinese as Pandian Dunyu)

Along with Drupkhang, Lhodro Gyatso is known as the right hand of China's installed Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu.

He is a member of the Steering Committee for Advanced Academic Titles of Tibetan Buddhism and vice president of the Buddhist Association of Shigatse.

In 2021 he participated in a meeting of the China Buddhist Association in Lhasa chaired by China's Panchen Lama. He was appointed as a member of the 13th CPPCC National Committee in 2018.¹²²

Methodology

Independent research is almost impossible in Tibet due to current restrictions and conditions in the country. The Chinese authorities do not permit access for foreign researchers except in extremely rare cases, and then only on subjects that are not sensitive or likely to produce findings that are critical of the government.

Tibet is listed as the least free country in the world alongside Syria and South Sudan.¹²³ While the CCP portrays Tibet as “open”, it has weaponised access, and denying access is increasingly used as a powerful tool to shut down critique by scholars, journalists, independent experts and foreign diplomats. The PRC is ranked as one of the worst countries for press freedom in the world.

Tibetans face severe danger including arrest and torture if they are even suspected of communicating about the political and social situation in Tibet either to people in Tibet or to those outside. The dangers and difficulties of communication via apps such as WeChat have been well documented; Tibet-related content is targeted for censorship on WeChat, and there are cases of Tibetans being arrested for sharing chat messages, songs, and photos on WeChat with content related to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan culture that Chinese authorities alleged to be ‘anti-Chinese’. Ethnic Chinese, too, face risks if they communicate about politically sensitive topics, particularly with foreigners or NGOs.

Given these dangers, this report is based on a combination of research and translation of Chinese scholarly papers and state media articles, and conversations with well-informed Tibetans outside the PRC. The identities of Tibetan scholars either in the PRC or with families or friends still in the PRC have been withheld upon request. A variety of official sources in both Chinese and Tibetan language, including provincial, prefectural and national websites, state media, online news channels were studied. We obtained several research papers by Chinese academics at state-run institutions from the PRC, which are not all publicly available.

In order to contextualise this information and understand specific Communist Party terms, we have worked with trilingual Tibetan researchers and well-informed sources (Tibetan and otherwise) in exile. Senior Tibetan monastics and Rinpoches were also consulted to ensure understanding of religious protocols; we are grateful for their time and assistance.

Notes

- ¹ https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-03/07/content_12131293.html
- ² 'Dalai Lama Keeps Firm Grip on Reins of Succession', New York Times, 5 October 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/06/world/asia/06iht-letter06.html>
- ³ For further details on current policy, see Tibet Advocacy Coalition report, 'Assaulting Identity', <https://tibetadvocacy.org/2021-tibet-report/>
- ⁴ 'Shannan City Holds a Meeting on the Arrangement and Deployment of the Educational Practice Activities of 'Complying with the Four Standards and Striving to Be Advanced Monks and Nuns' in 2020', Shannan Municipal Party Committee United Front Work Department, 14 April 2020. Also <http://www.lasribao.com/lrbzw/pc/content/201809/06/c44947.html> – archived at – <https://web.archive.org/web/20211215135448/http://www.lasribao.com/lrbzw/pc/content/201809/06/c44947.html> and http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrbzw/202111/22/content_112301.html archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20211215135449/http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrbzw/202111/22/content_112301.html
- ⁵ 'Tibetan political prisoner dies of injuries from severe beating', Tibet Watch, 29 April 2020, <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2020/4/29/tibetan-political-prisoner-dies-of-injuries-from-severe-beating>
- ⁶ In China, papers by scholars in Party-run institutes tend to inform policy development and can give important warning of harsh measures to come. The two papers cited in this briefing, obtained from the PRC, are by Wang Jiaquan, Xinhua, while the second is by Wang Yanmin and published by the Public Security University of China in Beijing: 1. Escaping a predicament: thoughts on the opportunities and considerations for communicating on Tibet in the "post-Dalai era", authored by Wang Jiaquan Wang Jiaquan, Xinhua News Agency, and presented the paper at a conference in 2009: https://tibetnetwork.org/free1/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Escaping-a-predicament_-thoughts-on-the-opportunities-and-considerations-for-communicating-on-Tibet-in-the-post-Dalai-era.pdf; 2. 'New changes and countermeasures against Tibet independence splittist activities in the post-Dalai era', authored by Wang Yanmin and published in 2017 by the Public Security University of China on 7 April 2017: <https://tibetnetwork.org/free1/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/New-changes-and-countermeasures-against-Tibet-independence-splittist-activities-in-the-post-Dalai-era.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://tibet.net/about-cta/>
- ⁸ Wang Yanmin draws a distinction between the 'post Dalai era', which is the present moment, while the Dalai Lama is alive and has handed over political power to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), and the 'late Dalai era', which refers to the period after he has passed away.# The author implies that the Dalai Lama's devolution of political power to a democracy in exile is regarded as strength rather than weakness when he refers to the "Dalai clique's strategy of 'advance by retreat'." <https://tibetnetwork.org/free1/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/New-changes-and-countermeasures-against-Tibet-independence-splittist-activities-in-the-post-Dalai-era.pdf>
- ⁹ Ibid, 6
- ¹⁰ https://tibetnetwork.org/free1/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Escaping-a-predicament_-thoughts-on-the-opportunities-and-considerations-for-communicating-on-Tibet-in-the-post-Dalai-era.pdf
- ¹¹ <https://tibetnetwork.org/free1/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/New-changes-and-countermeasures-against-Tibet-independence-splittist-activities-in-the-post-Dalai-era.pdf>
- ¹² Ibid
- ¹³ Ibid 8
- ¹⁴ A source from Tibet was cited saying that this group was convened on 12 January 2021 in an article by Robert Barnett and Allen Carlson, 31 March 2021, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/31/tibetans-in-exile-facing-new-challenges/>
- ¹⁵ The government emerging from this system was termed the Gaden Phodrang (from the name of the Dalai Lama's residence in Drepung monastery), and it was strengthened by an expansion of monasticism across the plateau of the Gelugpa, or Yellow Hat, school of Tibetan Buddhism, to which the Dalai Lama belongs. After the devolution of his political authority the Ganden Phodrang Government ceased to exist.
- ¹⁶ The Gaden Phodrang Trust <https://www.dalailama.com/office/the-dalai-lama-trust>
- ¹⁷ The statement, made on 24 September 2011, is on the Dalai Lama's website at <https://www.dalailama.com/the-dalai-lama/biography-and-daily-life/reincarnation>
- ¹⁸ Time magazine, 'A Conversation with the Dalai Lama', Alex Perry, 18 October 2004.
- ¹⁹ In 2007 the 14th Dalai Lama stated that the next Dalai Lama could possibly be a woman, remarking, "If a woman reveals herself as more useful the lama could very well be reincarnated in this form." The Telegraph, London, "Dalai Lama says successor could be a woman", Richard Spencer, 7 December 2001. The Dalai Lama has frequently spoken about the importance of women in leadership, saying that Tibetan culture, which is primarily based on Tibetan Buddhism, considers all sentient beings as equal including men and women. Under the Dalai Lama's leadership, for the first time Tibetan Buddhist nuns in exile are able to study for a Geshema Degree, comparable to a PHD in Buddhist philosophy. The first group to do so qualified in 2016.
- ²⁰ Interview with Japanese news agency Nikkei and other journalists in Dharamsala, reported by Yuji Kuronuma on 5 November 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Dalai-Lama-says-high-priests-to-discuss-adult-successor>. The Dalai Lama cites a Tibetan teacher and scholar of the 19th century, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, when he makes this distinction: "Reincarnation is what happens when someone takes rebirth after the predecessor's passing away; emanation is when manifestations take place without the source's passing away." The Dalai Lama's emphasis indicates that he could choose to "emanate" into another person before his death, thereby expressly choosing his successor. The statement also says that, "Alternatively it is possible for the Lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognised as his emanation."
- ²¹ <https://savetibet.org/tibetan-self-immolations/>
- ²² <https://www.dalailama.com/news/2006/tibetans-burn-wild-animal-skins-in-tibet-to-encourage-wildlife-preservation>

- ²³ <https://tibet.net/14th-tibetan-religious-conference-affirms-the-dalai-lamas-sole-authority-in-his-reincarnation-illgitimises-chinas-meddling-in-religious-affairs/>
- ²⁴ Central Tibetan Administration online, <https://tibet.net/3rd-special-general-meeting-vehemently-rejects-chinas-interference-in-tibetan-reincarnation/>
- ²⁵ The Dalai Lama was speaking in June 2020 to Justin Rowlatt, who cites the Dalai Lama as saying that “The Himalayan Buddhists of Tibet and Mongolia will decide what happens next”, 13 June 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-53028343>
- ²⁶ The document, known as the ‘70,000 character petition’, was published by Tibet Information Network in London (now closed) in 1997, in English translation.
- ²⁷ The Dharamsala based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) quoted an audio message by an unnamed Tibetan official at the Bhoejong Nangten Thuntsok (Tibetan Buddhism Association) as saying that “Jadrel (Chadrel) Rinpoche is dead”. “Some say that Jadrel Rinpoche was poisoned to death,” the report further quoted the audio message as saying. Posted by Phayul, 24 November 2011, <http://www.phayul.com/2011/11/24/30415/>
- ²⁸ Human Rights Watch report, 21 May 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/21/china-free-tibetans-unjustly-imprisoned>
- ²⁹ ‘Tibet marks Panchen Lama’s enthronement anniversary, 8 December 2005, cited in John Powers’ study of Chinese propaganda on Buddhism, ‘The Buddha Party’, Oxford University Press, 2017.
- ³⁰ A Party campaign, which effectively means the central importance of loyalty to the CCP for all religious practitioners https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific_voa-news-china_new-chinese-decree-tells-religious-leaders-support-communist-party/6205013.html
- ³¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/02/world/asia/02tibet.html>
- ³² WCTB中国佛协藏传佛教工作委员会, Zhongguo Foxie Zangchuan Fojiao Gongzuo Weiyuanhui.
- ³³ China Tibet Online, 7 August 2019, http://eng.tibet.cn/eng/news/tibetan/201908/t20190807_6656885.html
- ³⁴ This was flagged from his arrival in Lhasa in June 2019, when the state media reported: “On June 11, the Panchen Erdeni Choskyi Gyalpo, a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and a vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, arrived in Lhasa by plane to conduct research and Buddhist activities.” China Tibet Online, 28 June 2019, http://eng.tibet.cn/eng/news/tibetan/201906/t20190628_6623271.html
- ³⁵ China Tibet News online in Chinese, 28 August 2018, <http://www.xztzb.gov.cn/news/1535419327828.shtml>
- ³⁶ International Campaign for Tibet report, ‘Blue Gold from the Highest Plateau: Tibet’s water and global climate change’, <https://savetibet.org/new-report-reveals-global-significance-of-tibet/>
- ³⁷ Xinhua, 20 August 2018, http://eng.tibet.cn/eng/news/tibetan/201808/t20180820_6189684.html, cited in International Campaign for Tibet report, 11 September 2018, <https://savetibet.org/china-tightens-screws-on-tibetan-buddhism/>
- ³⁸ Robert Barnett, ‘Authenticity, secrecy, and public space: Chen Kuiyuan and Representations of the Panchen Lama reincarnation dispute of 1995’, 2008, in Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change, edited by Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwarz, 353-421. Leiden: E.J.Brill.
- ³⁹ China Daily, 26 April 2012, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-04/26/content_15144030.htm
- ⁴⁰ The three other Politburo members were Yu Zhengsheng of the Standing Committee, Sun Chunlan, the then UFWD head and Li Zhanshu, director of the General Office of the Party); also present was Jampa Phuntsok (at the time, the senior-most Tibetan in the Party). See Claude Arpi’s blog, 10 June 2015, <https://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2015/06/hot-summer-on-tibetan-plateau.html>
- ⁴¹ International Campaign for Tibet report, ‘World’s most famous Buddhist on the blacklist of atheist China’s first international Buddhist forum’, 13 April 2006.
- ⁴² <https://tibet.net/reports-of-chinese-panchen-lama-visit-to-nepal-a-political-gimmick-penpa/>
- ⁴³ In May 2019 Gyaltzen Norbu made his first trip to Thailand, <https://tibetpolicy.net/beijing-quietly-building-gyaltzen-norbus-spiritual-resume/>
- ⁴⁴ Translation of the regulations by the International Campaign for Tibet at: <https://savetibet.org/new-measures-on-reincarnation-reveal-partys-objectives-of-political-control/> and <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/measures-on-the-management-of-the-reincarnation-of-living-buddhas-in-0>
- ⁴⁵ Global Times, 25 August 2019, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1162625.shtml>
- ⁴⁶ Global Times, 29 April 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/980724.shtml>
- ⁴⁷ <https://www.cngold.com.cn/20160429d1903n68999550.html> [Working on 4 October 2022], 1 January 2016.
- ⁴⁸ Chinese White Paper, released 21 May 2021 : http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c_139959978.htm
- ⁴⁹ Earlier in 2021 the Sichuan Chinese Buddhist Association uploaded a list of 411 officially-approved reincarnate lamas in the province, stating that entries included 119 reincarnation living Buddhas in Ngaba, Amdo (Chinese: Aba, Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture); 291 living Buddhas in Kardze, Kham (Chinese: Ganzi, TAR) and one in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County. The full list is online at: <http://www.sctyzx.gov.cn/sczcfjhtml/> [Working on 4 October 2022] and featured on a Sichuan government website on 5 February 2021, <http://www.sichuanpeace.gov.cn/sfzjzs/20210205/2384974.html> [Working on 4 October 2022]
- ⁵⁰ The Chinese government did not issue strong statements condemning the departures of both Arjia Rinpoche and the Karmapa even after they both expressed their concerns in exile about the lack of religious freedom in Tibet. Former President and Party Secretary Jiang Zemin even wrote a verse praising Arjia Rinpoche following his departure, and encouraging him to come back. The Chinese authorities continued to make discreet efforts to communicate with the Karmapa in exile following his arrival in India, in order to encourage him to return.
- ⁵¹ Article by deputy director Liu Peng, in 2019.

- ⁵² Translation of announcement by Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/25/china-new-controls-tibetan-monastery>
- ⁵³ ‘China promotes its most sanctioned official to Tibetan Communist Party chief’, South China Morning Post, 19 October 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3152821/china-promotes-its-most-sanctioned-official-tibetan-party-chief>
- ⁵⁴ ‘Wang Junzheng, “Butcher of Xinjiang,” Becomes Party Secretary of Tibet’. Bitter Winter, 21 October 2022, <https://bitterwinter.org/wang-junzheng-butcher-of-xinjiang-becomes-party-secretary-of-tibet/>
- ⁵⁵ ‘China warns Tibetan monks ahead of March anniversaries’, Radio Free Asia, 18 February 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/warns-02182022152247.html>
- ⁵⁶ ‘The ‘poisonous fruit’ of Tibet’s religious policy as China publishes ‘Living Buddha’ database’, International Campaign for Tibet, 2 May 2016, <https://savetibet.org/the-poisonous-fruit-of-tibets-religious-policy-as-china-publishes-living-buddha-database/>
- ⁵⁷ ‘Tibetan ‘Living Buddhas’ compelled to show allegiance to Party at birthplace of Mao Zedong, International Campaign for Tibet, 8 November 2016, <https://savetibet.org/ict-inside-tibet-news-and-analysis-of-emerging-developments-in-tibet/#1>
- ⁵⁸ According to Tibetans in exile with connections in the area.
- ⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, 6 April 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/06/how-chinas-authorities-aim-control-tibetan-reincarnation>
- ⁶⁰ Chinese state media report on a training session for reincarnate lamas in 2016, following Xi Jinping’s remarks at a religious forum, 14 November 2016, http://www.cnr.cn/xz/jrxz/20161114/t20161114_523265639.shtml
- ⁶¹ https://www.chinavivae.com/biography/Zhu_Weiqun
- ⁶² Chinese state media report, 9 May 2020, <http://www.qhtyx.com/system/2020/05/09/013157687.shtml>
- ⁶³ Chinese state media, China Tibet Net, 20 September 2020, <http://www.tibetology.ac.cn/zgzx/xsdt/detail/1319124> [Working on 4 October 2022] archived at: <https://archive.vn/6xk4N>
- ⁶⁴ Chinese state media, 2 February 2021, http://zf.xgll.gov.cn/html/2021/zf_zfjg_zs_szlsg_gzdt_0202/34422.html [Working on 4 October 2022] archived at: <https://archive.vn/yotja>
- ⁶⁵ “China National Daily”, 12 January 2021, <http://www.mzb.com.cn/html/report/210130794-1.htm>
- ⁶⁶ Chinese White Paper, released 21 May 2021: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c_139959978.htm
- ⁶⁷ Qinghai government website: <http://www.qh.gov.cn/zwgk/system/2021/06/10/010025515.shtml> [Working on 4 October 2022]
- ⁶⁸ <https://freetibet.org/freedom-for-tibet/culture-religion/yarchen-gar/>
- ⁶⁹ <http://www.gxscse.com/xinwenshujv/550603.html> [Working on 4 October 2022]
- ⁷⁰ On 14 April 2015, China sent a delegation formed by five members of People’s Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region to the US, led by Shangtsa Tenzin Chudrak, a ‘reincarnation of living Buddha’ in Tibetan Buddhism, and deputy director of Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of Tibet. He reiterated the Chinese government’s position regarding to the Lhasa protests in 2008 and the Dalai Lama, and according to Chinese state media “introduced the rapid social economic development and human rights situation of Tibet in the 50 years since it’s ‘Liberation’ to US politicians, and also leaders of the exiled Tibetan communities based in US welcomed the visit of Tibetan delegation from Tibet.” http://www.tibetol.cn/html/2015/1_0414/17915.html
- ⁷¹ International Campaign for Tibet report, 2 December 2009, <https://savetibet.org/determination-to-resist-repression-continues-in-combat-ready-chamdo-frontline-of-patriotic-education/>
- ⁷² For a video of the monastery with English subtitles, see the Kham Film Project at: <http://www.khamfilmproject.org/sershul-tib/>, cited by International Campaign for Tibet report, 12 July 2018, <https://savetibet.org/china-forces-young-tibetan-monks-out-of-monastery-into-government-run-schools-as-part-of-drive-to-replace-monastic-education-with-political-propaganda/>
- ⁷³ Global Times, 15 May 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1102208.shtml> [Working on 4 October 2022]
- ⁷⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/08/world/asia/china-said-to-detain-returning-tibetan-pilgrims.html>
- ⁷⁵ See International Campaign for Tibet report, ‘A Policy Alienating Tibetans: The denial of passports to Tibetans as China tightens control’, <https://savetibet.org/policy-alienating-tibetans-denial-passports-tibetans-china-intensifies-control/> and Human Rights Watch, ‘One passport, two systems’, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/07/13/one-passport-two-systems/chinas-restrictions-foreign-travel-tibetans-and-others>
- ⁷⁶ Interview with author of report for the International Campaign for Tibet report, 9 January 2017, ‘Tibetan pilgrims’ <https://savetibet.org/tibetan-pilgrims-compelled-to-return-from-dalai-lama-teaching-in-bodh-gaya-india-china-calls-the-teaching-illegal/>
- ⁷⁷ There was a realisation that “Chinese Buddhism had far less influence than Theravada Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism in the world”, according to Dr Juyan Zhang in a paper on China’s faith diplomacy. Juyan Zhang (2013), China’s Faith Diplomacy, in: Phillip Seib (ed.), Religion and Public Diplomacy, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p 75–98.
- ⁷⁸ The Indian Republic News Portal, New Map Shows Arunachal As Part Of China, 28 June 2014.
- ⁷⁹ India Today, 31 December 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/china-renames-15-places-arunachal-pradesh-india-rejects-invented-names-1894377-2021-12-31>
- ⁸⁰ Matthew Akester, presentation for the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA), Delhi, 13 September 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZX7eTqrTJs>
- ⁸¹ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, link no longer working, cited by CNN, 6 April 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/05/asia/china-tibet-dalai-lama-border/index.html>.

- ⁸² Further complaints include: 2009 concerning a visit by the Dalai Lama# 2016 concerning a visit to Tawang by the then US Ambassador to India, Richard Verma and a Objections were also raised to the visit of the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje in 2016 at the request of the Buddhist Monpa people from the west of the Indian state.
- ⁸³ Tshering Chonzom Bhutia, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/the-politics-of-reincarnation-india-china-and-tibet/>.
- ⁸⁴ His testament was entitled 'Word for All the Faithful' (Tibetan: dad ris kun la gtam) and published in Batsaihan, O. 2015. IX Bogd Javzandamba Hutagt: Amidral ba tsag hugatsaa (The IX Bogdo Jetsun Dhampa Khutukhtu: The Life and Times). Ulaanbaatar: Mönhiin üseg.
- ⁸⁵ Cited by http://thecessblog.com/2018/02/double-headed-mongolian-buddhism-by-lhagvademchig-j-shastri-visiting-researcher-university-of-shiga-prefecture/#_edn4 [Working on 4 October 2022] and other sources.
- ⁸⁶ A link on DalaiLama.com covering the meeting with the press appeared to be offline (<https://www.dalailama.com/news/post/1496-meeting-with-the-press-before-returning-to-japan> – and in Tibetan <https://www.gyalwarinpoche.com/node/309>) [Both Working on 4 October 2022]
- ⁸⁷ 'Why Is Russia Moving Closer to Mongolia?', The Diplomat, 23 June 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/why-is-russia-moving-closer-to-mongolia/>
- ⁸⁸ Also see <http://blogs.ubc.ca/mongolia/2020/guest-post-dalai-lama-succession-mongolia-tibet-china-shugden/>
- ⁸⁹ Article in the Mongolian press on 26 December 2016, <https://dnn.mn/%D1%86-%D0%BC%D3%A9%D0%BD%D1%85-%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B8%D0%BB-%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80-%D1%85%D1%8D%D0%BC%D0%BD%D1%8D%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B9%D0%BD-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B4-%D1%88%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B6-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B0/> cited by Jichang Lulu in 'Outside the Urn'.
- ⁹⁰ Both links cited by Jichang Lulu for his piece 'Outside the Urn', <https://theasiadialogue.com/2017/03/21/thinking-outside-the-urn-china-and-the-reincarnation-of-mongolias-highest-lama/>, were offline at the time of writing.
- ⁹¹ 'Mongolia: Living from loan to loan', Financial Times, 12 September 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/4055d944-78cd-11e6-a0c6-39e2633162d5>
- ⁹² Tibet Journal, 7 March 2022, <https://www.tibetanjournal.com/?s=mongolia>
- ⁹³ The protests have been organised and overwhelmingly populated by members of the British Buddhist New Religious Movement (NRM), the 'New Kadampa Tradition' (NKT), under the front organisation sobriquet, the 'International Shugden Community (ISC)'. The New Kadampa Tradition, a registered charity, was now the fastest growing neo-Buddhist movement in the West, with over 200 centres and 900 branch classes worldwide. The group has 48 centres in the UK. Renowned for its aggressive recruitment and emphasis on rapid expansion, the NKT is also considered among the most controversial of New Religious Movements (NRMs) and has been the subject of several Parliamentary Questions in the UK.
- ⁹⁴ Reuters, 16 March 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-dalai-lama-idUSKCN0WD203> and investigation, 21 December 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-dalailama/>
- ⁹⁵ <http://www.savetibet.org/chinas-new-directive-on-controversial-shugden-spirit-in-tibet-in-bid-to-further-discredit-dalai-lama/#sthash.sP2FfXYs.dpuf>
- ⁹⁶ Reuters interview with Lama Tseta after his video testimony in 2015, 21 December 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-dalailama/>
- ⁹⁷ In one small monastery in Chamdo, the entire population of 21 monks was forced out when they refused to install a statue of Dorje Shugden. According to Tibetan sources, the authorities then appointed eight other monks and the statue was installed. Last year, also in Chamdo, a young Tibetan stabbed himself to death when police attempted to detain him over the dismantling of a Shugden statue six years ago, according to a report by Radio Free Asia. Further details on sources in International Campaign for Tibet report, <http://www.savetibet.org/chinas-new-directive-on-controversial-shugden-spirit-in-tibet-in-bid-to-further-discredit-dalai-lama/#sthash.sP2FfXYs.dpuf>. Further information on Shugden is available at the Dalai Lama's website (www.dalailama.com), the Central Tibetan Administration (www.tibet.net), and the Tibet Houses (www.dalailamaprotesters.info/)
- ⁹⁸ According to the Chinese state media, in March 2017, China committed foreign direct investment of \$8.2 billion to the Himalayan country out of total pledges of \$13.52 billion received at the Nepal Investment Summit. The same Global Times article noted that: "The Chinese pledges overshadowed India's commitment of \$317 million at the same event." Global Times, 14 August 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1061315.shtml> [Working on 4 October 2022]. In addition China has spent billions of dollars on infrastructure projects in Tibetan areas bordering Nepal. (Also see: Nikkei Asian Review, 9 March 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Belt-and-Road-reaches-Nepal-s-wild-north-winning-China-influence>).
- ⁹⁹ Cited by International Campaign for Tibet, 11 November 2019, <https://savetibet.org/concerns-rise-about-tibetans-status-in-nepal-as-chinese-leader-xi-jinping-prepares-to-visit/>. 'A blueprint for consolidating power: China exports Xi Jinping Thought to Nepal, Kathmandu Post, 24 September 2019, <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/09/24/a-blueprint-for-consolidating-power-china-exports-xi-jinping-thought-to-nepal/>
- ¹⁰⁰ "China should offer more generous aid to Nepal amid Sino-Indian border dispute", Global Times, 14 August 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1061315.shtml> [Working on 4 October 2022]
- ¹⁰¹ See International Campaign for Tibet series of reports on developments in Nepal, 'Dangerous Crossings', <https://savetibet.org/tag/dangerous-crossing/>
- ¹⁰² Central Tibetan Administration, 'OoT Nepal Celebrates the 87th Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama Despite Restrictions' 8 July 2022: <https://tibet.net/oot-nepal-celebrates-the-87th-birthday-of-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-despite-restrictions/>
- ¹⁰³ 'Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019', <https://savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BILLS-116-HR4331-E000179-Amdt-95.pdf>

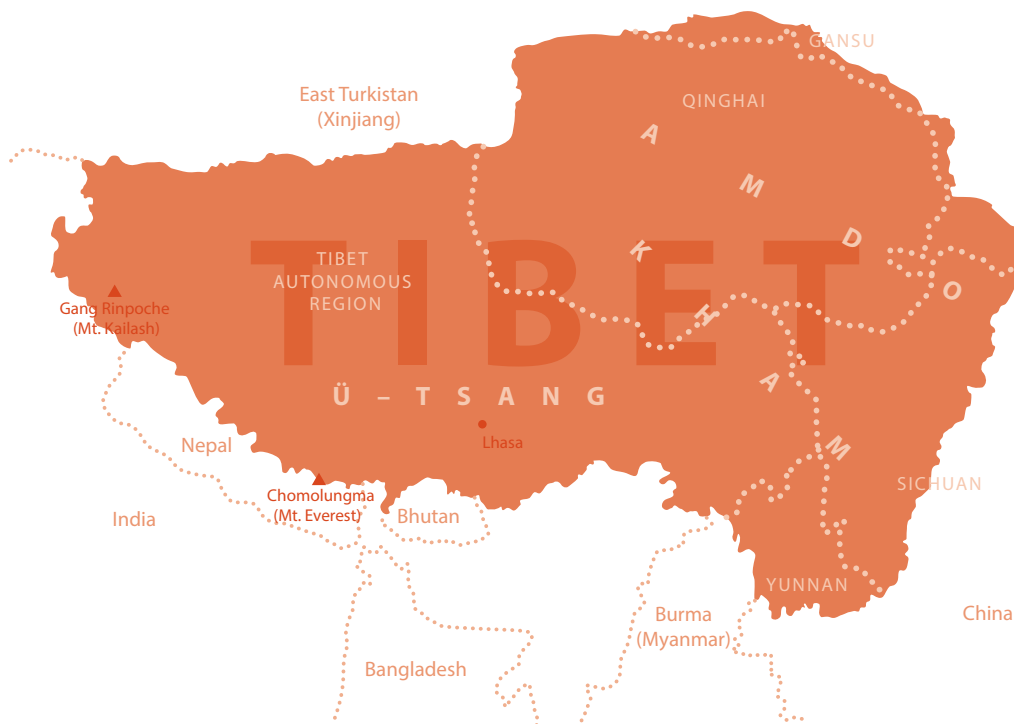
- ¹⁰⁴ Tibet Policy Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4331/text?format=txt&r=3&s=1>
- ¹⁰⁵ Tibet Policy Act talking points by the International Campaign for Tibet, <https://savetibet.org/advocacy/tibetan-policy-act/tibetan-policy-act-talking-points/>
- ¹⁰⁶ The assurance was given on 3 April 2020 by Joesp Borrell, the EU Foreign Affairs Chief and Vice President of the European Commission. – <https://savetibet.org/eu-opposes-chinese-interference-in-dalai-lama-succession/>
- ¹⁰⁷ Tibetan Review, 11 April 2020, <https://www.tibetanreview.net/eu-reaffirms-opposition-to-chinas-interference-in-dalai-lama-reincarnation-issue/>
- ¹⁰⁸ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf
- ¹⁰⁹ <https://www.lachambre.be/doc/CCRI/pdf/55/ic091.pdf>
- ¹¹⁰ <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vl3rj06x72zt>
- ¹¹¹ <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/174/1917407.pdf> p 25, cited by International Campaign for Tibet, 13 March 2020 <https://savetibet.org/german-and-eu-leaders-back-tibet-access-religious-freedom/>
- ¹¹² “India cannot leave the future of Buddhism to either China or chance,” wrote commentator Indrani Bagchi, source cited.
- ¹¹³ Foreign policy commentator Indrani Bagchi explained: “This is not the first time Modi has wished the Dalai Lama. In fact, according to officials, Modi has greeted him every year. But this was the first time [in 2021] Modi’s greeting was made public. It came bang in the middle of the worst military stand-off between India and China that has already changed the long-term contours of Indian foreign and strategic policies.” Times of India, 12 July 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/globespotting/india-should-declare-support-for-dalai-lamas-reincarnation-as-the-spiritual-leader-directs-it/>. Amitabh Mathur commented: “One of the many incremental measures that can be taken, with the dual purpose of serving as a pressure point on the Chinese and to remove misgivings amongst Tibetans, is for the Government of India to raise the public profile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In this context, Prime Minister Modi’s tweet informing that he had spoken with the Dalai Lama and greeted him on his birthday is a welcome step. It is a public signal not only to China but also to the Tibetan exile community that India remains steadfast in its commitment to their cause. However, some more consistent steps need to be taken.”
- ¹¹⁴ <https://securerusercontent.com/198.71.233.163/4vo.170.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/TPSA-bill-text-from-consolidated-spending-bill.pdf>
- ¹¹⁵ The figures below were originally identified by historian and Tibet specialist Claude Arpi in a blog posted on 24 March 2019, <https://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2019/03/the-lamas-who-will-select-chinese-15th.html>
- ¹¹⁶ There were reports that eight monks had been arrested in an indication of tensions at the monastery. Source is a Tibet Information Network report now taken offline following the closure of TIN. Cited by International Campaign for Tibet, ‘When the Sky Fell to Earth’, <https://savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2004ReligionReport.pdf>, footnote 96.
- ¹¹⁷ Claude Arpi blog, 30 January 2013, <https://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2013/01/retiring-and-dalai-lamas-reincarnations.html>
- ¹¹⁸ Tibet Daily in Chinese, 7 January 2022, http://www.tibet.cn/cn/culture/zx/202201/t20220107_7126858.html
- ¹¹⁹ Claude Arpi interviewed him for this blog, posted on 29 September 2015: <https://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2015/09/amchok-rinpoche-karma-of-tibet.html>
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ <https://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2019/03/the-lamas-who-will-select-chinese-15th.html>
- ¹²² Also see this report by the China Buddhist Association on 4 September 2016: <https://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/xw/yw1/2016-09-04/11380.html>
- ¹²³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tibet/freedom-world/2022>

About

The International Tibet Network is a global coalition of Tibet-related non-governmental organisations. Its purpose is to maximise the effectiveness of the worldwide Tibet movement. The Network works to increase the capacity of individual member organisations, develops coordinated strategic campaigns, and encourages increased cooperation among organisations, thereby strengthening the Tibet movement as a whole.

Network members are committed to non-violence as a fundamental principle of the Tibetan struggle. They regard Tibet as an occupied country and recognise the Tibetan Government in Exile as the sole legitimate government of the Tibetan people. Beyond these principles, the International Tibet Network respects the variety of views and opinions of its member organisations, for example concerning Tibet's future political status, and believes that diversity strengthens our movement.

TibetNetwork.org



Geographical Note: 'Tibet' refers to the three traditional Tibetan provinces of Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang. In the 1960s, China split Tibet into new administrative divisions: the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), and Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures within Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. When the Chinese government references Tibet, it is referring to the TAR.

Cover image: His Holiness the Dalai Lama at a public prayer gathering for victims of the floods in Leh, Ladakh. 13 September 2010. Tenzin Choejor / Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.