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Preface

Inks had been spilled, toner cartridges of modern-day press discarded to carry ideas in writing to articulate the value, practice and power associated with the production of knowledge in different societies at different points of time in history. Having been associated with this journal as someone standing between drafts and the press – otherwise referred to as editor – it might be worthwhile teasing out one or two questions and leave them suspended as intellectual fodder to think about the relevance of knowledge production on Tibet, particularly by Tibetans.

The two issues of the Tibet Policy Journal appear in two languages every year. One in Tibetan and the other in English. Surely, it is not without its challenges, yet receiving articles for the Tibetan issue has proven to be relatively easier.

Each year, articles for publication in the English issue of the TPI Journal trickles through in the inbox of the editor only after when the monsoon has subsided in Dharamshala. That is usually by the end of August. This leaves a precious little time to see through the publication within the deadline. On a couple of occasions, it has overshot the annual calendar, spilling into early months of the subsequent year. These are housekeeping issues that ought to have been managed with a little in-house administrative tweaking.

Dharamshala, in a way, it could be argued is the publishing capital within the exile Tibetan community for Tibetans. One of the key concerns articulated within the exile Tibetan community is the preservation of Tibetan culture and language.

Yet, significant publications in Tibetan language vastly outnumber publication in English by Tibetans. Bulk of these writings in Tibetan are coming on the back and propelled by intellectual labour of Tibetans who have come to exile from Tibet. This irony is worthy of reflection and introspection, and perhaps on the way seek course correction.

The two primary languages through which most of the Tibetans in exile read, write, and express are in Tibetan and English. A sizeable writing in Chinese language thrown in for variety. Generations of Tibetans have been educated in various Tibetan schools in the post-colonial subcontinent, predominantly in India. For many of these Tibetans who were either born or brought up in exile, the presence of English language pervades in everyday lives, from

booking travel tickets to deciding whether to throw away spurious milk that has outlived its shelf life. This makes the arguments to favour rupture from colonial pasts in many of the post-colonial societies quite untenable.

In many ways and forms of manifestations, the legacy of Macaulian project continues to live on. Under such structure and pedagogy which is negotiating its own decolonial practices in the global south, most of us continue to receive trainings in various academic institutions. Similarly with words in English, they come to us as heritage, they have their own biographies and are already burdened with their own histories. By the time it reaches to us, they have on most occasions mutated in its meanings and have assumed different hierarchies.

Most of us in exile, particularly in India are not exclusively trained to engage with Tibetan studies as an academic field of studies. This as an academic discipline has its own genealogy, methods and amassed a body of knowledge. This is where Tibetans in exile are well positioned to bring this knowledge in Tibetan language in conversation with theoretical currents, methodological innovations, academic discourses and ideas in other fields of learnings. This is the framework under which we hope this journal could serve as a midwife.

This is certainly not without precedent in our short, lived history in exile. Even a cursory reading of writings in English in exile could offer us a perfect model to replicate and break new paths. One can concede that many of the Tibetan writers in English who have published notable works are educated in non-Tibetan missionary schools in India where Orientalist assumptions on the East and Tibet has seeped through in their writings by the process of osmosis. The substrate of their literary diet is derived from colonial writers in English. But it is hard to deny that they wrote with a certain sense of confidence, occasional vulnerability, panache, and exuberance.

For most of the people who are involved in the process of producing knowledge, I hold the ideal that there is a motivation beyond personal advancements. They are driven by commitment that their work and research could affect social, political and cultural change in a positive direction from their subjective vantage points.

Now training the spotlight onto Tibet, research on contemporary Tibet has now become even more difficult. A few numbers of western anthropologists have in the last few decades produced some excellent ethnographic work. These field studies have enriched our understanding of contemporary Tibet when China was preparing to position itself on the global stage.

However, since 2008, the number of Tibetans coming into exile has now dwindled to a trickle. They had for many decades served as an invaluable interlocutor and a bridge between the exile community and contemporary Tibet under China's occupation. Severance of this bridge has compelled methodological innovation. One such example is reading of official Chinese documents and reports against the grain. Also myriad of open-source materials chiseled from embedded information made available by technological advancements.

Under the current political system in China, the Communist Party of China under Xi Jinping is yielding to the most extreme impulses of authoritarianism. Concurrently in Tibet, China has been rolling out numerous strategies that reflects policy guidelines since the 19th Party Congress. The scale and pace of these policies are breathtaking in its scope, yet the research and our understanding of these policies has fallen behind the curve.

In the last couple of years, a few research reports have emerged that has uncovered the scale and system of suppression that China has placed in Tibet. Particularly, the report on colonial-style boarding school in Tibet by the Tibet Action Institute. This has now become instrumental in creating awareness and to advocate for complete dismantling or to take actions to ameliorate the detrimental outcome of such pernicious project. Yet, our understanding on the pedagogy of oppression in these systems of schooling is incomplete, apart from incredible insights from a former academic who has witnessed this system from an intimately close quarter.

It is a truism that researching on contemporary Tibet has become increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, there are innovative and creative methodological template we could apply to add to the knowledge and our understanding on contemporary Tibet. Through this, I am sure we could break new frontiers in our comprehension on what is unravelling in Tibet. For this, we would welcome your contribution to subsequent issues of this journal.

Tenzin Desal

Dharamshala

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Xi Jinping's Pursuit of Totalitarian Rule through Digital Surveillance

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Abstract

China is widely expanding its surveillance network to strengthen and maintain vigilance over its entire population by tracking peoples' movements through cellphones and monitoring content of telephonic conversations and emails. Attempts by the government to transform the internet into a system of surveillance and censorship represent a threat to all fundamental rights and democracy at large. China's collaboration with authoritarian governments across the globe to build a large-scale surveillance system has given rise to global threats to free speech and privacy. As part of its political propaganda, Beijing has been setting up different surveillance strategies to control the outflow of news by instrumentalizing and implementing stringent laws to dominate its cyberspace.

This paper will examine the alarming rate of China's export of surveillance technology, the widespread harm and threat to fundamental human rights these technologies pose and their far-reaching implications on a just and democratic society. Exporting the surveillance model is also a strategic move by the CCP to further test its model, apply it in variable contexts, and gather additional data and intelligence. The Party gains direct access into partner-states information stream; advantageous information about markets, business opportunities, important actors, etc. Even possible sensitive information that could be used to persuade or coerce important actors on local or international matters. This paper will attempt to contribute to a new understanding of China's motive behind export of surveillance technology, implementation of New Cyber Security Laws and highlight China's growing surveillance investment inside Tibet.

Keywords: China, export, surveillance, internet, technology, Cyberspace network & Law

China's Instrumentalization of Laws to Restrict Cross-border Data Exchange

In the age of rapid technological advancement, as the news outlets in China increasingly goes digital, and as television goes mobile, the digital ecosystem has become one of the major concerns to the Chinese leadership and its rule. As part of its political propaganda, Beijing has been setting different communication strategies to control the outflow of news by instrumentalizing and implementing stringent laws to dominate its cyberspace. Through the implementation of three recent laws – the Cybersecurity Law, Data Security Law (DSL), and Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) – China has taken a range of measures that restrict cross-border data flows (Haldane 2021) and enforce data localization.

The Chinese Cybersecurity law (Creemers, Webster and Triolo 2018) was enacted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on November 7, 2013, and it came into effect on June 1, 2017 (Wagner 2017). The law is widely seen to be in line with the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) which aims to promote domestic industries such as cloud computing and big data processing. The 14th Five-Year Plan aims to centralize and control China through a digital ecosystem. As outlined in the 14th FYP:

We will welcome the digital age, activate the potential of data factors of productions, promote the construction of a cyber powerhouse, accelerate the construction of the digital economy, digital society, and digital government, and leverage digital transformations to drive overall changes in production methods, lifestyle, and governance.

The legislation passed by China's largely rubber-stamp parliament accelerates the damage it could do for global trade and services. According to the law, it requires companies to store all data within China (Zhang Dehao 2020) and it also includes contentious requirements to pass the security review, within China's stated goal to achieve "cyber sovereignty." The idea is that the state should be permitted to govern, monitor, and control data flow in their digital ecosystem.

The law forces the foreign companies operating within China to either invest in domestic server infrastructure following the law or partner with service providers such as Tencent, or Alibaba, thus saving capital expenditure costs for the foreign companies. The law is seen as a boon to domestic companies and has been criticized by the international community as creating unfair

competition against international technology companies such as Microsoft and Google.

Since the law came into effect, many foreign technology companies have already complied with the law. Apple has established a data center for Chinese users in a contractual arrangement with state-owned firm in Guizhou with \$1Billion in partnership (Store 2021). The Company has close ties to the Chinese government and transferred the operation and source of cloud data to China (BBC 2018).

In July 2017, Apple pulled out 60 VPN services (BBC 2017) from its AppStore in China. Meanwhile, online services, such as Skype which refused to store their data locally and were thereby delisted from China's domestic app stores. Since China is home to Apple's manufacturing services, Apple and other companies who are investing in China need to place human rights over profit-making.

The requirement for data localization (One Trust Data Guidance 2020) in article 37 of the Cyber Security Law is also seen as a move by Beijing to instrumentalize Chinese laws to prosecute entities and individuals who are viewed by the Chinese government in violation of its laws. Critics have (Qiang, 2021) concluded that the law exemplifies the practice of digital totalitarianism by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Xi Jinping's Web of Laws

Since President Xi Jinping took the reign of China in 2013, he was instrumental in creating mass surveillance in cyberspace (Qiang, 2019) by cracking down on online activities which are deemed to be politically sensitive. Xi would also upend and reform the Chinese internet governance to gain greater control over cyberspace than his predecessors. He also oversaw the creation and expansion of the Great Firewall.

Hence it is not a surprise when President Xi Jinping himself emphasized the link between the two concepts: "Without cybersecurity, there is no national security" (Rogier Creemers 2018). With the rising power of the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), the country's internet regulator, China has strictly extended its iron grip and tightened control over the flow of information.

The Data Security Law (DSL)

On August 20, 2021, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (PRC) passed the Personal

Information Protection Law (PIPL) (KPMG 2019) which came into effect on November 1, 2021. This Law curbs what information companies can gather and sets the standard for how it must be stored. It triggered concerns among foreign business companies and civil societies.

Before the implementation of the Data Security Law, there are more than 56 million LinkedIn members in China, which makes it lucrative and the third-biggest market after the United States and India. Because of the DSL, the company felt “a considerably more difficult operating environment and higher regulatory requirement.” Following this, the tech giant LinkedIn decided to withdraw despite China’s lucrative market.

Yahoo, one of the foremost search engines, entered the Chinese market in the year 1998. It was a roller coaster ride for them to operate in China. On 15 Feb, 2006, Yahoo, Microsoft, Cisco, and Google were criticized in the US Congressional hearing for yielding to pressure from China for censoring their content (BBC 2006). On 7 September, 2005, Yahoo is charged with supplying sensitive information to the Chinese authorities which led to the jailing of journalist Shi Tao (BBC 2005). The recent timing of Yahoo pulling out from China, coincided with the implementation of China’s New Data Protection Law on 1 Nov, 2021, (Guo, Kelly and Bob 2021) marking an important milestone in China’s effort to create stricter guidelines on the Chinese digital ecosystem.

The new law intrudes upon individuals’ rights to freedom of expression, opinion, privacy, and access to information. It also forces individuals to self-censor and restricts sharing images or videos that are perceived by the Chinese authorities as politically subversive. This law too limits the conditions where companies can gather personal information and set rules for how it is being used.

DSL also stipulates that the companies operating in the country must hand over their data if requested. For instance, one of the largest companies, Alibaba, was fined a record of \$2.8 billion after an anti-monopoly probe found that it has abused its market dominance (Bloomberg 2021). Other than heavy fines, the laws have also raised concerns among both foreign and domestic companies that they would have to hand over intellectual property rights or open a backdoor channel to operate in China’s market. The law is widely criticized for limiting freedom of speech. For example, the law explicitly requires most online services operating in China to collect and verify the identity of their users, and, when required to, surrender such information to law enforcement without a warrant. For instance, article 33 states that:

When institutions engaged in data transaction intermediary services provide services, they shall require the party providing the data to explain the source of the data, examine and verify the identities of both parties to the transactions, and retain verification and transaction records.

Digital activists have argued that this policy dissuades people from freely expressing their thoughts online, thus it further stifles free expression and reduces them as a sitting duck.

Passang (name changed) who spoke on the condition of anonymity in 2021 has recently arrived from Tibet. He expressed his fear and said: “I was more afraid that these data security laws will also be practiced extensively in Tibet. Under the authority of the newly-appointed party secretary of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, Wang Zunzheng, the Chinese authorities frequently advise Tibetans not to engage in any anti-social activities including contacting their family members and acquaintances outside Tibet. I have personally witnessed many Tibetans detained under vague and fictitious charges such as ‘leaking state secrets’ and ‘inciting separatism.’ Tibetans are jailed and interrogated with no apparent evidence of any wrongdoing. We are more concerned about its restrictions on online activities, particularly on social media.”

Tibetans are subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention, and torture for exercising their rights to freedom of expression in cyberspace. Since the law applies to data handling, activities in China as well as those outside China, which will result in more scrutiny of data protection and direct suppression of freedom of expression and rights to privacy.

Digital Totalitarianism and its Impact on Tibet

China’s intensive use of high-tech surveillance, including Artificial Intelligence(AI) and espionage method has further stifled the voices of the Tibetan people, leading to self-censorship. Under Xi’s authoritarian rule, through the manipulation of a series of new laws, Beijing continues to subdue freedom of expression and infringe directly upon individuals’ privacy and daily lives.

A senior Tibetan journalist, who wants to remain anonymous, said: “The implementation of cyber security law makes it difficult for gathering any information from Tibet, especially getting information from the capital of

Tibet, Lhasa. This has become almost impossible. The Chinese police consider monks to be troublemakers. Monasteries are kept under strict vigilance; the Tibetan monks are forced to install surreptitious monitoring apps on their smartphones. The dubious logic given by the authorities was that the app is meant to alert in case of accidental fire. But in reality, it is intended to monitor their daily conversations. He further explained that “we need to find different avenues to pass the messages of the Tibetan people from Tibet to tell the world about the increasing suppression under the Chinese regime.”

Many Tibetans are arrested knowingly or unknowingly. In March 2018, Woechung Gyatso, a Tibetan Monk was arrested and severely interrogated, and detained in Qinghai on suspicion of sharing politically sensitive content on social media and is being held at an undisclosed location.

In a notice, the Chinese (TCHRD 2020) Authorities in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” announced criminal prosecutions against individuals who use online communication as a tool to engage in activities against the Chinese Communist regime. The general public is ordered to report any rumors circulating on social media and those who are involved in spreading them. On 18 January, 2021, a Tibetan named Tse (Tibet Watch 2021) was arrested for “spreading rumors” on the WeChat group about Coronavirus. Another notice on 24 November, 2020 was also publicly posted about a week ago, which said that the authorities would “strike hard” against offenders as “per law.”

Sharing photographs, teachings, and talks of the Dalai Lama is viewed by Chinese authorities as illegal and this has resulted in Tibetans being arrested in Tibet. For instance, the Chinese authorities have arrested several Tibetans from Karze (Tibet) for celebrating the 86th birthday of the Dalai Lama (Lhamo 2021).

Through their extensive propaganda machinery (Brandy 2015), China claims that Tibetans enjoy the freedom of expression and freedom of religion belief in Tibet. The Chinese government has steadfastly maintained a complete crackdown on any expression of reverence to the Dalai Lama, and even the possession of his picture is criminalized.

Recently, a Chinese court in Tibet sentenced writer and educator Go Sherab Gyatso (Outlook 2021) to a 10-year prison sentence. He was known for his outspoken advocacy and activism (Tibet.net 2021) towards the protection and preservation of Tibet’s environment, religion, language, and culture.

In order to fulfill his dream of retaining power, Xi has been bending laws in the pursuit of digital totalitarianism and has been implementing a series of sophisticated strategies to further control the already suppressed society. By doing this, general secretary Xi Jinping is destroying the dreams of common Chinese people and it will also further tarnish China's nose-diving image exacerbated by the spread of Coronavirus. To achieve a truly healthy "Digital ecosystem," Chinese leaders may review the CSL and its related laws, and implement a stand-alone data protection law that adequately safeguard people's rights and give a space to breathe for foreign and domestic companies. China also needs to reconsider policies related to data localization, not just to enhance the security of the internet and preserve human rights, but also to ensure society's overall mental health and progress in the long run. Because to fulfill China's dream, China may first need to fulfill the common Chinese peoples' dreams and also the dreams of Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Southern Mongolian people.

Beijing's Export of Surveillance Technology

How would you feel if your every move and decision were being tracked, recorded, and ranked? Nobody really wants a camera to follow them everywhere they go. Welcome to China where the Chinese government is experimenting a new system of surveillance as part of its overt and covert expansion of government intervention and surveillance. Alarming, this surveillance system is increasingly showing up all around the world.

China is widely expanding its surveillance network to strengthen and maintain vigilance of its entire populace by tracking peoples' movements through cell phones and monitoring content of telephonic conversations and emails. Attempts by the government to transform the internet into a system of surveillance and censorship represent a threat to all fundamental rights, media freedom and democracy at large.

Cities in China are under the heaviest CCTV surveillance in the world, according to a new analysis by Comparitech, which provides information for research and comparative analysis of tech services. It has been widely reported that China today has about 200 million CCTV cameras in use, a figure predicted to rise 213% by 2022 to 626 million. China is projected to have one public CCTV camera for every two people. However, the Comparitech report (Zhang 2019) suggests the number could be far higher. These monitoring systems are more intensive and far-reaching in Tibet.

Another striking feature of China's sophisticated surveillance system is the widespread use of highly advanced cameras with artificial intelligence which have facial recognition systems which can identify people's age, ethnicity and gender. These cameras can run recognition systems that match you with your relatives and your associates and within no time pull out a list of people you frequently associate. These invisible eyes that follow you, wherever you go and whatever you do make you suffocated and generate a strong and lasting sense of fear.

The Chinese government admits that the technology using facial recognition, body scanning, and geo-tracking are matched with personal data to keep tabs on people in real life and online. Their master plan is to use these technologies as the backbone of their nascent social credit system.

Social Credit System

Since Xi Jinping tightened his power grip on technology and surveillance many new notorious strategies to suppress the freedom of expression have been implemented. These include the introduction of new cyber security law, the launch of Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) and the initiation of a social credit system (Ma 2018) – a score-based system relying on the adoption of desired behavior based on social merit. This system both punishes and rewards key behaviors through a range of initiatives such as public shaming, travel bans, limited or extended business opportunities, and favorable or devalued credit ratings. The ultimate goal is to hammer into citizens the idea that “keeping trust is glorious and breaking trust is disgraceful.”

The point system incentivizes lawfulness, integrity, and trustworthiness with real time impacts on what citizens can and can't do. Perks for good behavior could lead to privileges of faster internet services, travel ticket booking convenience in flights and trains, and even concessions on advance deposits for renting cars and booking hotels. Having a low social credit score could mean restrictions on travel, refusal of passport, difficulty in getting employment and being publicly shamed among others.

China's National Public Credit Information Center reported that it had cancelled airline tickets of 17.5 million people (Reisinger 2019) due to their unproductive scores and 5.5 million were barred from booking train tickets in 2018 because of low social credit scores.

For the Communist Party of China, the key motive for gathering, analyzing and evaluating data is to preempt and uncover any threat to the social and political stability of its iron grip on China. It is indeed for the first that a government is employing highly advanced technology to expand internet surveillance and censorship to maintain the stability of its own rule. China uses surveillance technology to spy on human right defenders, dissidents, and lawyers, deny freedom of speech and subvert anti-communist party campaigns. This abuse of technology fundamentally undermines democracy and threatens human rights.

According to the People's Daily, the party-owned largest newspaper group in China, the Chinese capital of Beijing is now completely covered by surveillance cameras that watch over "every corner of Beijing city" (ZENG 2015).

Authoritarian governments across the globe are acquiring state of the art technologies to repress dissent at a rapid pace. For construction of "Smart Cities" in Pakistan, Philippines and Kenya, Chinese companies including Huawei and ZTE are involved in supplying extensive built-in surveillance technologies. Bonifacio Global City in the Philippines, outfitted by Huawei, has internet-connected cameras that provide "24/7 intelligent security surveillance with data analytics to detect crime and manage traffic."

Surveillance Built with Loans from the Chinese Government

China's export of surveillance technology began in 2008 during the Beijing Olympic where it marketed its surveillance mechanisms and 'solutions'. Prior to the Olympics, 300,000 new cameras were installed in the capital. China then invited many foreign officials to observe the effectiveness of its new authoritarian technologically advanced tools. Since then, the Party has exported its 'solutions' to many countries with severe human rights records including but not limited to Ecuador, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Kenya, Iran, and Zimbabwe. China's collaboration with authoritarian governments across the globe to build large-scale surveillance systems has given rise to global threats to free speech and privacy.

In his research, Prof. Steven Feldman from Boise State University's School of Public Service found that China is exporting AI-equipped surveillance technology to at least 54 countries around the world with government types ranging from closed authoritarian to flawed democracies."

With China's help Ecuador now has a new surveillance system, ECU-911 meant to expand automated policing and reduce crime rates. This \$200 million deal

was jointly signed by China's State-controlled C.E.I.E.C and Huawei and is funded by Chinese loans (Millar 2019) in exchange for Ecuador providing them with their principal export, oil. Ecuador's surveillance systems were not only made in China, but were installed by Chinese companies and workers. The Chinese even trained the Ecuadorians how to use it.

China's export of advanced technologies is a show of strength and capability to the world. It represents the country's ability to compete with established powers (notably the US) in important sectors, reducing dependency and promoting self-reliance. However, Chinese companies often lack transparency and, most importantly, are without a doubt subordinate to the Chinese Communist Party.

The seriousness of the perceived security threats from Chinese technology companies is evident from the US's notable restriction or outright prohibition of companies such as Huawei. The US has also encouraged its allies to do the same. Australia, Great-Britain, New-Zealand, the US, and Canada have all adopted measures to restrict the use of Huawei devices and Chinese infrastructure.

Security Implications of the Export of Chinese Surveillance Systems

Under President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government has vastly extended domestic surveillance, fueling a new generation of companies that make sophisticated technology at ever-lower prices. With China's global outreach, the domestic systems are spreading far and wide.

Loans from Beijing have made surveillance technology available to governments that could not have previously afforded it. Adding to this lucrative deal is China's total lack of transparency and accountability of its use. This rapid development and export of China's surveillance equipment is helping strengthen a future of tech-driven repression, potentially leading to the loss of privacy.

CCP's export of surveillance systems to willing governments around the globe has given rise to significant national security risks for individual states as a result from their extensive reliance on and cooperation with Chinese state-owned enterprises or CCP member-owned firms in key infrastructure development projects and expansion of the state security apparatus. These high-tech exports including 5G infrastructure, fiber optics, and telecom equipment aid China's rapidly rising control and influence over its trading partners. Ultimately, these strategic moves could lead to China's goal of strengthening its internet

sovereignty by securing its position as a great global power. China hopes to widen its sphere of influence particularly in South-East Asia and Africa with the help of the Belt and Road initiative (BRI), thereby promoting its economic dominance, and providing an alternative to the United States and its allies. The advent of modern technology in China granted the government, particularly under President Xi Jinping's leadership, the opportunity to innovate, the expertise to initiate and the free-hand to implement modern surveillance technologies. This new and extremely effective combination of state control apparatus has proven to be incredibly valuable for the Party in tightening security measures, assuring its long-term survival, shaping public opinion, and suppressing resistance.

CCP's Evolving Surveillance Strategies in Tibet

China in its latest White Paper on Tibet claims that “with modern communications network mainly consisting of optical cables and satellites, Tibet is part of the information expressway.” This development has led to a more complicated and dynamic threat to the digital landscape. With the advent of optical cables and satellites networks, it poses a new form of security concern and at the same time infringes on the individual privacy of Tibetans using the internet.

The bamboo curtains around Tibet have been shut for a long time and Tibet is off limits for free and independent visits of international media, journalists, advocates, researchers and government and civil society representatives. The highly repressive situation inside Tibet makes it difficult to understand the scope of digital surveillance in the region. Over the years, China's surveillance system in Tibet has been growing and evolving at an unprecedented scale. The abundance of manned and unmanned checkpoints, AI, CCTV camera networks and re-education centers under the garb of national security have added another layer of suppression to an already extremely oppressive environment in Tibet.

Furthermore, the CCP is constantly upgrading its ‘Great Firewall of China’ to monitor and limit online traffic by creating its ‘own’ internet ecosystem thereby limiting access to the ‘traditional’ web. Chinese authorities in Tibet are offering large cash rewards to informants in a bid to stamp out in its cyberspace what it sees as online ‘subversive’ activities curbing free flow and dissemination of information (RFA 2019). According to a notice issued on Feb 28, 2019, by three government departments of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, “information leading to the arrests of social media users deemed disloyal to China can fetch up to 300,000 Yuan (\$42,582). People found sharing political

contents or commentary deemed sensitive are liable to face arrest and heavy criminal penalties” (RFA 2019).

Surveillance in Tibet and Xinjiang has been widely known as “Orwellian.” In addition to the traditional security surveillance apparatus of the military, police, and neighborhood spies, modern surveillance technologies have been specifically developed and tested in these regions. According to Human Right Watch reports, tight security measure currently being practiced in Uyghur to suppress the resistance movement were previously successfully developed and practiced in Tibet by Chen Quanquo, TAR’s then party secretary. Following his highly suppressive policies in Tibet, Chen was appointed the party secretary in Xinjiang and continues to be the chief architect of the massive surveillance and mass detention systems in the region. Spring 2008 witnessed the historic and widespread uprisings in Tibet against China’s rule which were followed by a series of self-immolations by reported 159 Tibetans demanding the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and freedom in Tibet (ICT 2022). These protests prompted China to maximize and fast track the scope and intensity of its security surveillance both in the number of security personnel and digital technology.

In January 2012, (HRW 2013) the central government introduced a new surveillance system called the “grid system of social management.” In preparation of the implementing the new system, cadres in plainclothes were deployed in every Tibetan village and monastery. The campaign ironically called “Benefit the Masses” involved sending some 21,000 communist party cadres from townships and urban areas to live in teams of four or more in each of the 5,000 villages in TAR. Authorities expanded their network of small police posts known as “convenience” stations to every 200-300 meters in urban areas, to quickly respond to any protests. In 2016, a total of 696 convenient police check posts were newly set up in Lhasa with high-tech equipment to monitor daily lives.

Companies facilitating digital surveillance in Tibet include Alibaba, search engine Baidu, chat app operator Tencent holdings, voice recognition company iFlyTek and facial recognition system Sense Time. State subsidies and freehand to use Tibet as an open laboratory make Tibetan an enticing proposition for these businesses to invest and perfect their latest technologies. Companies operating in Tibet enjoy a highly reduced tax rate of 9% compared to the standard corporate tax rate of 25% for the rest of China (Nikkei 2019).

Conclusion

The substantial investment by these Chinese technology firms in recent years is one of the reasons critics of the new law believe it is partly designed to bolster the domestic Chinese data management and telecommunications industry against global competitors.

The non-transparent and unchecked export and adoption of China's highly advanced technologies to foreign markets represent severe intelligence and security threats, especially when integrated directly to national security and surveillance apparatuses. China has successfully put at risk the safety and security of dissidents and activists all over the world and strengthened rogue and undemocratic regimes with its export of surveillance technologies.

Another serious danger for states adopting Chinese technologies is their reliance on foreign technology to run and manage core government systems thus representing a risk to their national security. CCP has not only been proliferating its methods through free or subsidized hardware, AI technology and training, but has also been gaining insights and direct connection to the information stream of partner-states.

Surveillance information streams can be realistically used in two ways as targeted micro information to gain leverage on important targets and to gather and employ big data; the use of which is essentially endless. In this sense, there is little to no transparency nor accountability and imposes a very high security threat.

In Tibet, over the last decade, surveillance technologies referred to as the "nets in the sky and traps on the ground" has further suppressed the fundamental freedoms of expression, movement, and assembly. New and highly advanced technologies have given unrestricted and illicit power to the state security apparatus to intensify and escalate mass surveillance. Checkpoints with smart surveillance and facial recognition are present in cities and at crossings between neighboring districts and provinces. Tibetans inside their homes are tracked through their phones and once they step outside surveillance and facial recognition technologies follow them wherever they go. The full extent and the scale of China's oppressive surveillance system in Tibet which could very well be more draconian than what has been documented so far is yet to be ascertained due to lack of access to Tibet. This is the reality of today's Tibet and if the free world is unwilling to restrict the import of China's surveillance technologies, this could be your reality tomorrow.

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Recentering Tibet in India's Approach to China

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Abstract

India and China have transitioned into modern states along with their relationship which has seen ups and downs like any other nation states. They have come a long way into forming a considerably stable bilateral relationship that was best reflected in their economic ties. However, whether the relationship has matured or grown remains ambiguous. Both countries share bitter memories of the 1962 conflict that often tend to accentuate the deteriorating relationship exacerbated by the continuing border dispute. The overall relationship that remains fragile and loaded with distrust and hostility points towards many reasons among which ill-conceived policy and measures towards Tibet, the deliberate dissociation of the subject of Tibet, and her status from New Delhi's policy have yielded little benefit for India. The ambiguity over the political status of Tibet was inherited from Nehru's idealism and his lofty aspiration in bringing China to the global stage. This according to Nirupama Rao was "inadequately reciprocated, even spurned by China, as the relationship unraveled" (Rao 2021, xxii). This paper is an attempt to examine India's approach and orientation to Tibet vis-a-vis China as their bilateral relations remain complex and at worst dubious. Tibet plays an integral role in the modern history of Sino-India relations, but the centrality of Tibet in the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations and politics from 1950 has been reduced to political inferences, either as a bone of contention between India and China or an 'irritant factor'. Therefore, it is with an attempt to bring to light the importance of decentering Tibet in India's approach to China that this paper dwells into some critical issues that call for urgency and is imperative for India's engagement with China in the future.

Keywords: Tibet, India, China, the Dalai Lama, Foreign Policy

India more than China pretended that Tibet was not a factor in Sino-Indian relations. This studied silence suited the interests and purposes of both parties. To admit that Tibet was impinging on their bilateral relations was to admit a third party to their bilateral transactions, like the 1913-14 Shimla Convention-which the PRC has consistently opposed. Yet, it was China, not India that hinted during the period March 1959 to September 1962 that the invisible problem impinging on almost every issue in their bilateral relations was the Tibetan Question (Norbu 1997, 1087)

It could be stated that 'Tibet' is an 'overlap' issue involving China and India with the Tibetans making up an important third vertex...ignored by the first two! (Narayan 2017, 66)

Introduction

The two quotes cited at the beginning of this article are emblematic of the trajectory that Tibet has taken within the corridors of Indian foreign policy. The late Prof. Dawa Norbu's influential article "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality" was published in 1997 yet its observation that Tibet continues to be marginalized in Sino-India relations but cast a looming shadow over the relationship resonates even today. Dr. Raviprasad Narayan draws focus on a similar argument, writing exactly 10 years since then, on the importance of Tibet in India's foreign policy dealings with China, yet the continued insistence to draw a cover of silence over it. This article, therefore, builds on this body of work, by attempting to highlight the importance of Tibet in India's relations with China and why Delhi needs to re-center the issue within its foreign policy.

Since the National Uprising of Tibetans in 1959 against the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and tens of thousands of Tibetans have sought refuge in India (Haidar 2021). Nepal and Bhutan have also played host to Tibetans, while many have immigrated to Western countries in the past three decades. India, however, remains the political and cultural center of the Tibetan diaspora and its national movement. Nevertheless, it is on the political spectrum that India remains deeply tied to Tibet, whether it be the centuries-old historical connections or the geopolitics between India, Tibet, and China. In fact, Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, the Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and one who worked with numerous Indian leaders and statesman affirmed that "any person with even an elementary knowledge of the geopolitical situation of India, Tibet, and the PRC knows that Tibet

is vitally important to and inseparable from India's future " (Gyari 2022, 392). He further notes that "it is not about interference but rather about its reluctance to act" that he criticized in India's approach to Tibet that at times were overly cautious and unrealistically optimistic toward PRC in hopes of appeasing the Chinese. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet also expressed that the South Asian country is "taking an over-cautious approach towards Tibet" indicating a deep sense of frustration (The Economic Times 2008). This paper, therefore, is an attempt to recenter Tibet within the Sino-India dialogue, an approach that has been pushed to the margins of Indian foreign policy, by highlighting some of the critical issues that resonate with India's relations with Tibet and China.

Tibet in Sino – India Relations: From Undeniable to Sidelined

The 1950s represented a new age for the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China, as they emerged as newly recognized modern nations. The initial bonhomie between these two nations was a result of both being post-colonial entities with the geographical and demographic potential to lead Asia in the face of increasing ideological conflicts between the USA and USSR. The decline of the initial rapture between the two countries was accentuated by Mao's insecurity over the Soviet Union's overtures toward India and the pertinent issue of Tibet that brought China and India into close physical proximity. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, is a predominant figure during this time, and many have criticized his approach towards Tibet and China. Reflecting British India's position on Tibet, as a buffer state between India and China, the newly formed government in Delhi sought to recognize Tibet's treaty-making powers, recognizing China's suzerainty over the latter, but not its sovereignty (Norbu 1997, 1079). However, after the 17 Point agreement was signed in May 1951 (nullified by the Dalai Lama), Nehru decided to befriend China at the expense of Tibet's historical status as a de jure country. Lalit Mansingh, who served as India's Foreign Secretary (1999-2000) and ambassador to the United States (2001-2004), correlated Nehru's decision to accept China's sovereignty over Tibet without any reciprocity to his idealistic hope of fostering an anti-imperialist solidarity between the two post-colonial nations, a hope that died with the 1962 War with China (Bork 2015, 57).

Nehru's efforts for an "amicable settlement" of the dispute to bring normalcy to India-China relations materialized into the 1954 Panchsheel agreement, one that effectively "*sacrificed Tibet's historical status at the altar of Sino-Indian*

friendship (Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai), should be seen in this perspective” (Norbu 1997, 1080). The Agreement became a cornerstone of India’s foreign policy in its relation with but China was criticized as being a naïve venture that overtly assumed a reciprocal sincerity from Beijing towards the principles of the Treaty (Bandyopadhyaya 1962, 390). The Sino-India conflict of 1962 heralded the end of the much-vaunted “*bindi-chini bhai-Bhai*” sentimentality that had defined India’s approach towards China until that point.

Although observers like Arunabh Ghosh underscore the need to decenter the teleology of the 1962 conflict and instead approach afresh the possibilities of China-India relations (Ghosh 2017, 700), there are fundamental differences between the two on various issues, particularly on Tibet. India’s relationship with China vis-à-vis Tibet and its borders was driven by substantial differences on these issues, as it shared close historical and cultural ties with Tibet but its economic and political future was bound to China (Agarwal 1989, 69). Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 visit to China, the first visit to China by an Indian Prime Minister in 34 years and one that heralded a thaw in the frosty relations between the two since the 1962 conflict, was centered on resolving the border issue, one that was rooted within the discussions on Tibet (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2014). Not only did Rajiv Gandhi re-affirm India’s position on recognizing Tibet as an autonomous region of China but as Dawa Norbu notes “*while China continues to hint that Tibet is the basic problem as they did during Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to China and Li Peng’s to India, New Delhi continues to pretend that it has little to do with the territorial dispute*” (Norbu 1997, 1094).

Similarly, India once again reiterated that the Tibetan Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the PRC during the 2003 meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chinese leader Wen Jiabao (PTI 2003). The one-sided negotiation that took place in Beijing, as Brahma Chellany argued, highlighted that “China sees New Delhi as the key to its continued control of Tibet, whose traditional cultural and trade links were southward to India. By handing Beijing the formulation it wanted, India has opened itself to more Chinese pressure.” (Chellaney 2003). This not only loosens New Delhi’s remaining leverage, according to Chellaney, but he also points out how Indian recognition continues a pattern of self-damaging Indian betrayal of Tibet that began under PM Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Tibet issue has been time and again downplayed by the governments of China and India, as they try to pursue a mutually beneficial relationship. India’s decision to appease China since the Panchsheel Agreement has not

received the same level of reciprocity from Beijing, as evidenced by the fact that China dragged its feet in recognizing Sikkim as part of India until 2005 (The Economic Times 2005), while it continues to deny India's claims in Kashmir.

In 2018, to express Tibetan exile's gratefulness to India, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) organised a 'Thank You India' event which initially had been scheduled in New Delhi but had to be moved to Dharamsala in early March. The Indian government was reported to have cautioned its senior officials to stay away from attending the event amidst tensions with China (Hindustan Times 2018). An Indian news source notes that there is a shift in India's policy on Tibet under the increasing tensions between India and China, indicating the Indian government managing the Dalai Lama in public forums (drishtias.com 2021). In 2014, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi invited the head of the Tibetan government in exile, Dr. Lobsang Sangay to his swearing ceremony but was not invited the second time when PM Modi was re-elected. Furthermore, the Tibetan Special Frontier Force that has participated in a number of engagements including the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, the 1988 Operation Cactus, the 1999 Kargil war and in the Galwan valley clash in 2020 has only recently received public recognition after the Galwan valley clash killing Tibetans.

It was only after Nyima Tenzin's death that Indian public discovered the existence of Special Frontier Force (SFF), a Tibetan army also known as Establishment 22 or Vikas Regiment, operating under the Cabinet Secretariat and the Indian Army (Arpi 2022). Anirban Bhaumik reporting for Deccan Herald wrote in 2020 during Galwan valley clash that "the valour of the SFF soldiers was never officially acknowledged. Nor were the supreme sacrifices they made on the battlegrounds" (Bhaumik 2020). Although Nyima Tenzin's cremation was conducted with full military honors, his coffin draped with Indian and Tibetan flags with senior leader of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attending and paying his respect for the demise, it is also noteworthy that previously, SFF soldiers killed in operations were cremated quietly, without much fanfare (Ramachandran 2020). Ramachandran notes that "the highly publicized funeral accorded to Tenzin is widely believed to have been aimed at reminding Chinese leaders of India's "Tibet card," and signaling New Delhi's willingness to use it" (Ibid). Brahma Chellaney interestingly notes that "nothing can be more humiliating to China than India's use of its SFF comprising mainly Tibetan exiles to foil the latest PLA incursion" (Bhaumik 2020). The Galwan Valley clash in 2020 confrontation within India and Chinese forces over the Galwan border is amongst the highest level of tension since the 1962 conflict.

It represents the dichotomy of how Tibet has taken on different role within Indian public discourse and in Indian foreign policy. During the Galwan Valley incident, within Indian public, Tibet was prominently discussed with media refocusing on Tibetan ‘political issue’ inviting Tibetan leaders, parliamentarians and others. On the other hand, Indian government’s position on Tibet was hardly discussed publicly. The official measure was banning few Chinese apps but there is no statement on Tibet. The Galwan clash represents that throughout the decade Tibet remain prominent in Indian public discourse while Tibet was marginalized on the official level, silent and sidelined.

While the optimism behind a fresh approach to India’s relations with China is undoubtedly important, a more holistic and emboldened approach with a renewed focus on recentering Tibet in India’s approach to China is vital and undeniable. The Tibet issue in India-China relations is an important point of contention and yet largely undervalued and more importantly sometimes treated as adversarial to the development of India’s friendship with China. The issue is also mired within highly contesting political narratives since the conflict over Tibet’s status is a conflict over history (Narayan 2017, 59). Thus, the way India has formed its position on Tibet does appear to have a consequential bearing on the development of India’s relationship with China.

Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China

India’s border conflicts with China is centered primarily around two large sectors, mostly centered in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. China claims the former as being part of its administered region of Aksai Chin while the latter as being part of “South Tibet”. Both of these conflicts stem from the history of China’s occupation of Tibet, India’s reluctance since Nehru to aggressively push forward on the Tibet issue, and the endurance of British India’s policies in the region. The most recent expression of these conflicts was the skirmishes and loss of lives that occurred in the Galwan valley of India between Indian and Chinese forces (BBC 2020).

Such incidents highlight how Tibet is and continues to remain an integral part of India-China relations and a core issue in their conflict. The Tibet issue and its national movement would not have gained steam without India’s explicit and/or tacit support.

Although India and China are increasingly aware of Tibet’s geostrategic importance and the intimate connection of their strategic interests with it, Tibet largely remains disfavored in the asymmetric relations between India

and China. The intent to sidestep the Tibet issue in the interest of developing good neighborly relations has not had the desired results (Mathur 2021). The Galwan clash is among the latest incident showcasing India's failure to assess the enormous importance of the role of Tibet in Sino-India relations. As long as India continues to focus on its border conflicts with China, without acknowledging the presence of the Tibet issue that historically, geographically, and politically defines its cross-border relations, every other rhetoric and foreign strategy will remain fraught with challenges. It is, therefore, paramount that within the contours of its relations with China, India needs to revisit, readdress and redefine its approach towards Tibet, recognizing it as the single most important factor driving Sino-Indian border relations, which was Mao Zedong's view, and also seems to reflect contemporary Chinese thinking (Sikri 2011, 65).

Indian scholars and writers (Rajiv Sikri 2011, B Pokharna 2009, Claude Arpi 2011, R.S. Kalha 2012, Sharad K. Soni and Reena Marwah 2011, Sebastian N 2011 to name few), while discussing Tibet in India-China bilateral relations, often use the phrase the 'Tibet factor' since the Tibet issue is closely linked to the border issue between India and China that remains contentious despite several sessions of border talks in the last decades. However, what constitutes the definition of the 'Tibet factor' has changed over the decades, depending on the geopolitical context. The disagreement over territories remains a perennial one, almost to the extent that they are fixed in time, without any recourse to changes. Therefore, what is of more interest are those issues that have resonated with the 'Tibet factor' as constitutive elements, but are subject to varying degrees of relevance based on the context in which they are framed. In the subsequent discussion, this paper will seek to highlight those issues that are increasingly gaining importance vis -a- vis India's relation with China and Tibet.

The Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama

The immediate issue that needs to be addressed concerns the reincarnation of the present Dalai Lama. China's State Administration for Religious Affairs issued a decree on August 3rd, 2007, which effectively sought to gain complete control over the matters of reincarnated Buddhas or *tulkus*, deeming that all reincarnations must be approved by the Government, or else they would be considered "illegal or invalid" (ICT 2007). The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is intimately entwined with this matter and there already has been a precedent, with the abrupt abduction of the legitimate 11th Panchen Lama in 1995 and his subsequent replacement being appointed by the Chinese authorities. The Dalai Lama is considered a "separatist leader" by China and any support rendered

towards him and his followers is deemed a violation of sovereignty and integrity of the country and considered interference in China's internal affairs (Xinhua 2022). Both the 17th Karmapa and 10th Panchen Lama were "approved" by the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council in 1992 and 1995 respectively (Freedom of Religious Belief in China 1996). The State Council believes that a show of their approval of such reincarnations displays the "fact that the Tibetan people's right to religious freedom is respected and protected" (Ibid). However, former President of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Lobsang Sangay maintained that he have objected and criticized the China's interference on the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and firmly believe and uphold the idea that only the Dalai Lama has the rightful authority to choose his reincarnation and that the Chinese state should respect his decision (CTA 2019). In response to their consternations, "the Chinese government resolutely opposes attempts to split the country along ethnic lines, and any use of religious fanaticism to divide the people, split the country or harm the unity among all ethnic groups or engage in illegal activities and terrorist actions under the signboard of religion" (Freedom of Religious Belief in China 1996). The 14th Tibetan Religious Conference was convened on November 27, 2019, at Dharamsala to discuss the issue of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. The three-day conference which saw the participation of all heads of major religious traditions of Tibetan Buddhism adopted the "Dharamsala Declaration" that highlighted the continuation of Dalai Lama's reincarnation, and that the right to choose his successor rested solely with the present Dalai Lama (CTA 2019).

The issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation affects not only Tibetans but millions of Buddhists around the world who revere him as a spiritual teacher. However, within the corridors of geopolitics, the ongoing battle between China and Tibetans over the reincarnation subject is of intimate concern to India's foreign policy. According to John Garver, historically, Tibet's occupation and Chinese failure to win over Tibetans and subsequent asylum to the Dalai Lama are identified as the origin of 1962 Sino-Indian conflict (Garver 2014, 12). Domestically, the Dalai Lama has been revered by the Indian population and the top leadership circles of the Indian political arena. Internationally, he has become India's *de facto* ambassador in Buddhist circles. However, India has also benefited tremendously from his mere presence in the country, as that remains a sore sticking point for China's ongoing project to legitimize its rule in Tibet. How can the "motherland" be united, if the spiritual leader of Tibetans continues to remain in exile? At the present moment, India has remained tight-lipped about its position on the reincarnation issue, one that bears resemblance to the failed attempt to appease China in the 1950s. Other

stakeholders such as the United States have backed the right of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people to decide on the matter. It is not prudent for India to back away from taking a strong position on a matter that China has laid such vociferous claims on. India needs to lay out a clear foreign policy statement and plan of action about its position on recognizing the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, instead of relegating it as an afterthought in its dealings with Beijing. The danger of such an approach is that Beijing has placed it at the center of its policies on Tibet.

Foreign Policy: Centering the Tibet issue

India's foreign policy in the past about Tibet has seen less than favorable results or commitments. Whether it be the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement or the 2003 Declaration signed between India and China, it has been involved in one-sided deals that immensely favored China. In the process, the Tibet issue was sacrificed in favor of the hope that China would behave like a friendly neighbor. The 1962 War and the recent border incursions have laid those hopes in the grave. Therefore, it is imperative that moving forward, India should frame and adopt a clear and robust foreign policy about its diplomatic engagements with China, and the Tibet issue should be at the center of the discussion, not as a mere consequence. There are three overarching concerns that such a foreign policy should seek to address, namely:

A) Tibet's position in India's border situation with China: India's long-standing border disputes with China, whether it be on the Ladakh border or in Arunachal Pradesh, stems from the geographical and historically important position that Tibet has occupied between China and India. The occupation of Tibet by China has brought the latter in border contentions with India. In particular, the ongoing dispute in Arunachal Pradesh is rooted in the acceptance, by India, of the McMahon Line that was signed between representatives of British India and Tibet in 1914 and the subsequent rejection of the same by China, who claims the region as part of its "South Tibet". India, after independence, has held on to these lines of control in its disputes with China but has been hesitant in recognizing Tibet's unique historical position in the validation and making of these borderlines, which China has taken advantage of. India has already formally twice accepted China's claims over Tibet, which has narrowed its course of action for the future. How India decides to proceed with this matter will influence its relations with China but sticking to its present course of 'appeasement' about Tibet will certainly bolster China's confidence on the issues relating to the borders between both countries.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the above conundrum, India's foreign policy concerns with Tibet will need to move between two poles: either treating Tibet as a unresolved political issue i.e. one that is related to issues of forceful occupation, recognition of the Central Tibetan Administration, etc. or solely as a human rights/environmental issue or both. Choosing the former directly impacts the above-mentioned border issues while the latter would be more of a matter of pressing China for its policies within Tibet, its people, and its environment. The latter will be elaborated below.

B) Several countries in recent years and decades have called out the Chinese regime for its abysmal records on human rights in Tibet and adjoining regions of Xinjiang, etc. The pressure against Beijing has intensified recently, with many countries including India, agreeing on a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics. However, India, despite its close historical connection to Tibet as well as its contemporary association with the Tibetan diaspora, the Central Tibetan Administration, and the Dalai Lama, has not explicitly express their concern over Tibet compared to the United States and the European Union in pressurizing China on its human rights record. The United States recently passed the Tibet Policy and Support Act that officially recognizes that there is a grave human rights problem in Tibet while the Reciprocal Access Act lays out punitive measures against Chinese authorities for blocking access to Tibet from the outside.

India needs to position the framing of such clear actions and strong statements within its foreign policy objectives. Notwithstanding the 1962 War and the recent border incursions, China has been quite vocal in its opposition to India's policies in Kashmir and the Northeast and has fostered close ties with India's primary security adversary in the West i.e., Pakistan. Therefore, India needs to push forward with decisive diplomatic actions and human rights violations in Tibet. It can certainly garner across-the-board support, particularly among Western countries.

Similarly, it can outline these intentions through its foreign policies and domestically. The then President of the Central Tibetan Administration, Lobsang Sangay, was invited to Prime Minister Modi's first swearing-in ceremony, but that invitation was not repeated for the second time that he was sworn in. On the other hand, US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinkens, met the representative of the Dalai Lama in Delhi during his first official visit in 2021. The Tibet issue can be highlighted strongly if there are more visible and stronger connections between the Indian Government and the Central Tibetan

Administration. It would be an opportunity amiss if such relations are pushed to the periphery, to appease Beijing's heightened sensibilities. Furthermore, it also serves the dual purpose of first, pressurizing China on its human rights record by building a relationship with the diasporic leadership and raising the political aspect of the Tibet issue by legitimizing the role of the Central Tibetan Administration as the representative of the diasporic population.

C) Finally, a matter that affects the Indian economy and population directly is the ongoing damming of Tibet's rivers by China. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation states that agriculture accounted for 23% of the country's GDP, and employed 59% of the country's total workforce in 2016 (FAO 2022). It shows that India remains largely an agriculture-based society and economy and the Brahmaputra River which flows from Tibet has a significant role to play in the survival of the farming community in Northern India. India's anxiety over its shared rivers with the PRC are not only because PRC has the advantage of being able to control the water flow of the River Brahmaputra as the upper riparian, but also due to its ability to deny critical hydrological data to India (Sergeant 2022, 14). A longstanding concern of India has been PRC's ongoing dam building on the river and that River Brahmaputra will be diverted northwards (Ibid). India's former Secretary for Water Resources, argue that even a 10 per cent diversion of the River Brahmaputra could have serious consequences (Ibid). Brahma Chellaney, author of *Water, Peace, and War: Confronting the Global Water Crisis*, and one of the most prominent voices in India warning of the PRC's ability to turn upstream dams into a political weapon, maintains that, "no nation is more vulnerable to China's re-engineering of transboundary flows than India because it alone receives nearly half of all river waters that leave Chinese territory" (Chellaney 2014, 642). As he continues to note that "water has emerged as a new divide in Sino-Indian relations and indeed China is damming not just the Brahmaputra, on which it has already completed several dams, but also other rivers in Tibet that flow into India" (Chellaney 2014, 639). Additionally, it is also a matter of hydro politics, as rivers have increasingly occupied a central role in geopolitical balances between China and the downstream countries that depend on the water that flows from Tibet. Other countries such as Burma and Cambodia have put out strong statements against China's increasing damming of Tibet's rivers, but India's response has been largely limited to official memos and a few statements.

Indicating China as the most vivid example of upstream water hegemony in Asia, Brahma Chellaney maintains that, "it has established a hydro-hegemony unparalleled on any continent by annexing the Tibetan Plateau in 1951, the

starting place of major international rivers” (Chellaney 2014, 636). Hydro politics is the next big balancer of geopolitical relations of power, particularly in Asia. China recognizes this and has effectively used it to bolster its position in the region. India, like other downstream countries, many of whom are its neighbors like Bangladesh and Nepal, needs to take a central role in the opposition that has been shown against China’s damming projects by the affected countries. Unlike most of them, India has been recognized as an important player in the South Asian region and this is an opportunity for the country to frame a clear foreign policy framework to bolster its relations with these countries to balance China’s presence in the region through the issue of river damming in Tibet that immensely affects all of these countries.

D) India and China have passed through a period of sustained economic growth that has fueled their rise in the corridors of geopolitics as major world powers. Their bilateral relations are one of the most important relationships in international relations, politically and economically, while both countries grapple with existing border tensions and regional rivalry. The United States of America casts an overarching shadow on this relationship, as both strategic partners and rivals of each country respectively. Within the context of India’s foreign policy maneuvering vis-à-vis China and the United States, Tibet has not featured prominently within these calculations, with Delhi hesitant to ally itself with Washington D.C. to balance China in Asia by rallying around the so-called “Tibet Card”. Vijay Gokhale reasons why China considered India’s relevance only in the context of China’s periphery or in multilateral affairs and did not regard or referred to as major powers (Gokhale 2021, 8). Here Norbu notes that New Delhi’s edge over other countries in playing the Tibetan card against China resides in the importance that the PRC had attached to India as a crucial key in preventing external intervention in Tibet. However, India’s threat becomes credible only when Beijing perceives it to be acting in close cooperation with great powers. The Tibetan card fails as a credible threat to China when India and its outside ally do not share similar levels of interest in Tibet.

India and the United States view China as a vital economic partner and political rival. However, the nature of these relationships differs. For the US, it is about keeping at bay an emerging geopolitical rival that seeks to alter the current US-led world order. For India, on the other hand, it is about attempting to balance the dominant influence of China in South Asia. Both countries have realized their mutual interests in checking China’s emerging political strength, with the recent formation of the QUAD being its most visible representation.

The QUAD was essentially formed due to this concern over a rising Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, the QUAD essentially remains a multilateral strategic coalition. If we are to look at the bilateral relations of the United States and India, the only point of mutual interest that both countries have avoided any significant friction, or policy-wise as well as enjoyed support from their respective domestic constituencies, is Tibet. Other agendas such as Kashmir, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and even the recent Ukraine crisis have seen both countries clash on numerous occasions. For the United States, Tibet is one of the few issues that receives bilateral support and successive governments have advocated on its behalf, whether it be human rights, religion, the environment, etc. India has been at the center of the Sino – Tibet relations, from the days of British India to the flight and establishment of the Tibetan diaspora within its borders. Its six decades-long border conflicts with China are rooted within this historical relationship with Tibet.

The US affirmed its support for Tibet with the 2019 signing of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, establishing its official position on the “right of the Tibetan Buddhist community in selecting and venerating their religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama”. Although both India and the US accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, their association with Tibet is undeniably strong. During President Obama’s visit to New Delhi in 2015, both governments shared the view that the border, and Tibet, should receive more attention from Washington (Bork 2015, 57). Lalit Mansingh, who served as India’s foreign secretary and ambassador to the United States, advocates placing Tibet high on the agenda of the US-India relationship because there is no other issue on which the US and India are mutually intertwined to such a degree (Ibid).

The reality, however, remains that both governments have historically failed to frame their alliance over Tibet. India refrained from supporting the Tibet issue in the 1950s and 60s, a period when the United States’ support for Tibet was at an all-time high. As the United States moved away from pushing for self-determination to focusing on the human rights and environmental concerns of Tibetans inside Tibet, India continued to maintain a rigid demeanor, prioritizing its economic relationship with China. However, whenever border conflicts inevitably flare up, the Tibet issue is pushed to the limelight of India’s political circles and the public eye. Furthermore, the country is deeply entwined with the political future of the Tibetan National movement as it plays host to the Central Tibetan Administration, the Dalai Lama, and the largest population

of Tibetans outside of Tibet. It is also important to note the re-emergence of Buddhism in India is deeply connected to the political scenario that brought Tibetans to the doorsteps of India in 1959. So, therefore, avoiding Tibet in its bilateral relations with the US vis-à-vis the objective of balancing China in South Asia, is a moment of significant missed political opportunity. Tibet can serve as the space where the mutual interests of both countries regarding a rising China can meet, and one with the most potential of receiving sustained democratic support. Delhi and Washington D.C. have used the “Tibet card” in varying capacities in their relationship with China, but the opportunities for a mutual understanding on this issue are of immense importance, one that both governments should consider in their respective foreign policy calculations

Conclusion

To quote Nirupama Rao again here who states that, “the best foreign policy is a combination of firmness and flexibility” (Rao 2021, 456). India’s foreign policy about China has been framed between the opposing desire to bolster economic cooperation that is of vital importance to both countries, particularly India, and the geopolitical need to counter China’s increasing assertiveness in the border conflicts and its rising presence in the Asian continent. It is within this contradiction that China has continued to push forward its agenda to the detriment of India’s national interests, whether it be its refusal to accept Sikkim as part of India until late 2005, almost fifty years after India accepted Tibet as part of PRC or its continuing efforts to de-legitimize the McMahon Line, a position that India has unconsciously strengthened by its hesitation to center the Tibet issue in its foreign policy. The Tibet issue and the Tibetans are increasingly tied with India’s future course on China and its policy and strategy on Tibet vis-a-vis China needs to be carefully recalibrated to take on a much more active position against the bulwark of Beijing policy objectives.

This paper has sought to highlight some of the key issues that have and will continue to gain significance vis-à-vis India’s association with the ‘Tibet factor’. China has already formulated its policies on such matters, whether it be laying their claims to the immense trove of soft power that the institution of the Dalai Lama holds for Tibetans and Buddhists across the world, or the strategic significance of hydro-politics through its damming efforts, to name a few. India needs an equally robust foreign policy, but that would be unlikely without Delhi deciding to revisit and deviate from its reluctance to center Tibet in its dealing with China.

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China and Strategic Infrastructures in Tibet: CCP's Recipe for a Troubled Relationship

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Abstract

It could be argued that one of the biggest challenges faced by China in invading Tibet was the poor network of roads in Tibet, because of the lack of motorable roads in Tibet it failed to act as per its scheduled time. Otherwise, the Party is known for its timely strike. In one of the letters sent to the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in January 1959, Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai mentioned that 'Conditions were not ripe for the settlement of borders.' And later it was found that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) failed to invade Tibet as per the scheduled plan because of the lack of a motorable road to bring military machinery to Tibet. The construction of the motorable road in Drokham is not an isolated plan to irritate Bhutan and India. The paper highlights the strategic importance of roads in the India-China War of 1962 and the strategic significance of the Drokham plateau. Furthermore, the paper attempts to show that the construction of the motorable road in Drokham is not an isolated event but rather a strategic move to gain long-term control over the land. This paper also examines China's strategic thinking and behavior in the South China Sea, particularly on Mischief Reef, and compares it with its strategic behavior towards India.

Keywords: China, Belt and Road Initiative, India, Tibet, South China Sea.

Introduction

Maybe for the first time in the history of the Chinese Communist Party's existence, it failed to act as per its scheduled time. Otherwise, the Party is known for its timely strike. In one of the letters sent to the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in January 1959, Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai mentioned that 'Conditions were not ripe for the settlement of borders.' And later it was found that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) failed to invade Tibet as per the scheduled plan because of the lack of proper roads connecting Tibet to China.

Historically, empires have always given utmost importance to roads. For instance, the Assyrian empire in Western Asia began what is believed to be the first organized road-building, and continued it for 500 to 600 years. Since the Assyrian empire was trying to dominate that part of the world, it had to be able to move its armies effectively along with supplies and equipment (Sponholtz). The Roman Empire was known for its straightest and most complex network of roads in the world. The good network of roads served two purposes for the Roman Empire. During wartime with its neighboring kingdoms, it served for the quick deployment of soldiers and thus helped the Roman Empire to out-pace its enemies. On the other hand, the well-connected roads helped the empire for sending quick reinforcements and to crush rebellions in its conquered colonies (Tultrim 2016). Both empires emerged victorious in many battles and ruled for many years. The common feature about both empires was their priorities given to the construction of roads and their efficient utilization during peacetime as well as in wartime.

The condition of transportation in Independent Tibet

In the past when transport was confined exclusively to pack animals, roads were little more than rough tracks, and there were no major bridges. Some rivers were crossed either in yak-skin boats holding ten people or in large wooden ferries carrying about thirty animals and men (Shakabpa 2010, 10). Hence in those days, there were no such proper roads for traveling across Tibet. However, there were trade routes. From Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, a route runs to Leh, the capital of Ladakh, and thence through southern Tibet to Shigatse and Lhasa. From Lhasa, a much-used route goes to Chamdo (Bell 2000, 18). Charles Bell further clarifies that “It will be readily understood that the word ‘trade-route’ does not connote a well-made road. The tracks, along which the trade passes, are sometimes very rough” (Bell 2000, 18). Not only that, the construction of the jeep road by the British Trade Agent from Phari and Gyantse in 1930 was objected to by the local people after it was in operation for a few months.

To summarize, there was hardly any sign of good roads in Tibet except for the usual trade routes taken by the traders. In those days, depending on the needs and necessities, most of the developments took place in Tibet. For instance, as early as the 14th century, a Tibetan mahasiddha, Tangtong Gyalpo was known for his unparalleled skill as an architect, blacksmith, civil engineer, artist, writer of operas, and dispeller of epidemics (Oakley 2012).

By the end of his life, Tangtong had constructed fifty-eight iron bridges, sixty

wooden bridges, and 118 ferries. His biographies mention only about a dozen of these iron bridges by name and location, but many more have survived in different regions of Tibet and Bhutan to the present day (Streans 2007, 40). One of the main purposes behind the construction of iron bridges is the number of rivers in Tibet. Hence, the bridges were necessary for the Tibetan people to cross. In other words, the construction of highways and later railways undertaken by the party-state is based on its strategic and political interests. No sooner had the PLA troops entered Eastern Tibet, that they began building roads. Strategic development continued in Tibet for more than two decades, and certainly, the most spectacular aspect of the overall development in Tibet from 1950 to 1976, has been strategic or military-oriented. Thus, it indicated the significance of roads for the Chinese army (Norbu 2008, 688). In short, the infrastructure developments in Tibet are based on the strategic and political interests of Communist China, hence it was engineered to serve the interests of Communist China.

Strategic Importance of the road network during the India-China War of 1962

During the invasion of Tibet, Mao Zedong had given strict instructions to the PLA about the construction of roads from China to Tibet. Mao ordered the PLA as it prepared to 'liberate' Tibet to 'advance while building roads (J. W. Garver 2001, 83). Hence the construction of roads was given the utmost importance by the PLA. Even after the complete invasion of Tibet, the Chinese Communist Party made its biggest priority to connect all the isolated parts of Tibet for better control over the Tibetan people and its borders with the neighboring countries.

On 6 August 2014, China celebrated its 60th anniversary of the opening of the Chengdu-Lhasa highway (CCP calls it the Sichuan-Tibet highway) and Xining-Lhasa highway" (CCP calls it "The Qinghai-Tibet highway"). In short, the construction of these two highways were completed in 1954, much before the war with India. In a written comment which was made public on Wednesday, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the opening of two highways, President Xi Jinping noted "The two highways played a vital role in Tibet's social system, economic and social development, as well as consolidating the southwest frontiers and promoting national unity (Zhang 2014). However, in reality, the most vital thing the two highways did was to consolidate their occupation of Tibet and their vital role as military supply lines during the India-China War of 1962.

For a few years, the Indian government ignored the PLA activities in Aksai Chin located in north-western India for several reasons and gave higher priority to the development of its relations with China. However, Beijing's announcement of its road-building activities in Aksai Chin made it impossible to continue to ignore China's presence there. India protested and then started sending patrols to the area. The Sino-Indian boundary conflict had begun (J. W. Garver 2001, 89). The construction of the road in the Aksai Chin further heightened India's sense of insecurity about China.

Bruce Riedel in his book *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and the Sino-Indian War*, states that 'The Chinese, by contrast, had made the building of roads and other supply facilities a high priority since they entered Tibet in 1950, seeing their constructions as a means to entrench their occupation of the province.' He further adds, 'The building of major roads in Aksai Chin connecting the Chinese regions of Tibet and Xinjiang had been a precipitating factor in the build-up of tensions in the late 1950s' (Riedel 2016, 91).

All the above highways later served as major supply lines and facilitated China's plan for simultaneous attacks on all sectors of the Indian border with Tibet. R.S. Kalha, a former Indian ambassador to Iraq, was quoted in an article published in *The Quint*, a digital news outlet, on 5 July 2017, where he asserted that 'The Chinese attack began simultaneously in all sectors of the border, both in the west and in the east, at the same time—5 am IST on 20 October 1962—completely synchronized as per Beijing time' (Malhotra 2017).

Thus, it clearly shows that after the successful construction of all three roads connecting Tibet to China, the attacks carried out by China against India in 1962 were premeditated.

Strategic Significance of the DrokLam Plateau

The road construction activities by the PLA in the disputed region between Tibet, Bhutan, and India are neither something new nor an isolated event. As early as the late 1950s, during the India-China war, China started claiming the DrokLam plateau. Ever since 1988, PLA patrols regularly cut past Bhutan's claim line, the Sinche La ridge, using a network of dirt tracks that lead up to Chele La post, the country's permanent position on the Zompelri ridge, which leads westward from India's Doka La post (Swami 2017).

Tsering Shakya, an authority on modern Tibetan history has stated that 'The dispute is not about Dromo county, but a part of it called DrokLam, Tibetan

for ‘Nomads’ Path’, which Indians call Doklam. It’s about 600 sq km, about the size of Toronto (Shakya 2017). He further adds, ‘This narrow valley was one of the important trade routes between India and Tibet and the hamlet of Dromo was the staging post for all goods entering and leaving Tibet.’ However, besides being an important trade route between India and Tibet, this route was also used by invaders from India, such as Bhaktiyar Khilji, a Muslim conqueror and Governor of Bengal under the Delhi Sultanate attempted invasion of Tibet in the 13th century from the Chumbi Valley. Later, Major Younghusband too have taken this route for an invasion of Tibet during 1903-1904. Major Francis Younghusband mentioned the vulnerability and importance of the Chumbi Valley in these very words:

Chumbi is the key to Tibet. It is also the most difficult part of the road to Lhasa. Situated in the Chumbi Valley, we should have a clear run into Tibet, for the Tang-la (pass) across the watershed is an open plain several miles wide. The Chumbi Valley is the only strategical point of value in the whole north-eastern frontier from Kashmir to Burma. It was the surest guarantee for the fulfillment of the new Treaty which we could possibly get, except the establishment of an agent at Lhasa, and the obtaining of a guarantee had from the first been placed as one of the chief objects of my Mission (Younghusband 1910, 297).

Sun Tzu (a famed Chinese general, military strategist, and philosopher) in his famous treatise called *The Art of War* mentioned six kinds of terrains or grounds during a battle with an enemy. From the above description given by Major Francis Younghusband, it appears that the valley in question is an ‘entangling ground’. According to Sun Tzu, ‘A ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy is called an entangling ground. From a position of this sort, if the enemy is unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then, return being impossible, disaster will ensue (Tzu 2005, 63-64).’ For instance, after marching for fifteen days Bakhtiar Khilji reached Tibet, possibly the Chumbi Valley. He started looting Tibetan villages. There was an uprising among the Tibetans who inflicted heavy casualties on Bakhtiar’s forces. Bakhtiar then decided to withdraw to Bengal but all along the escape route, the hilly forces carried on a relentless guerrilla-style attack on the Turkish army (Sengupta 2011, 63). Despite the development in science and technology, the security importance of the Chumbi Valley is still relevant. John W. Garver has elucidated the security perception of the Indian government as early as 2001:

Indian security perceptions regarding the defence of the northeast are influenced by the fact that the region is connected to the rest of India by only a narrow strip of land lying between Nepal and Bangladesh... Through that narrow corridor run the roads and rail lines between India's northeastern states and the Indian heartland. The distance from Yadong to Siliguri is only a bit over one hundred kilometers. The Chumbi Valley is full of strong PLA bases, and the road between Yadong and Lhasa is one of two funnels through which could be poured the PLA strength normally concentrated between Shigatze and Zedang (J. W. Garver 2001, 96).

According to Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya, the narrow valley was one of the important trade routes between India and Tibet and the hamlet of Dromo (ཨོལ་ཨོ) was the staging post for the traders. Hence, for British India, the staging post was the Chumbi Valley, for Newar merchants from Nepal it came under the name of Sharsingma (ཤར་སྒྲིང་མ་), and for the Chinese, Yatung, now written as Yadong. Like the narrow valley is known by different names, this valley has also served different purposes other than a trade route.

Strategic Significance of Infrastructure Developments Along the Indo-Tibet Border and Its Implications

The latest road construction by the PLA in Drokham too is not an isolated incident, it was a well-planned strategy pursued by CCP to claim Drokham as its own. In an insightful paper written by Ron E. Hassner, *The Path to Indivisibility: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes*, the author argues that the construction of material links (for example, roads) and symbolic links (such as temples and churches) in the disputed territory would further integrate the disputed territory in question with the occupying state. For instance, in the case of Golan Heights, to support the handful of settlers and improve the mobility of its military forces, the government initiated an extension of Israel's road and water infrastructure into the Golan. Israel's bus lines started serving Golan residents in 1968 (Hassner 2004). Since late 2016, the Chinese government has pushed the policy of developing "well-off villages in border areas" (边境地区小康村建设规划, *bianjing diqu xiaokang cun jianshe guihua*) in the Tibet as a part of its rural revitalization programme. The Tibet government's 2017 Work Report, for the first time, mentioned "the construction of well-off villages and simultaneous relocation of Tibetans in these villages (Desai 2021, 16).

This policy has been further given a fillip in the latest China's Five-Year Plan of 2021. Where in addition to the strategic border infrastructures like highways, railways, and airports, in its Five-Year-Plan, China included the promotion of prosperity and stability of the border and improving the work and living conditions in border areas as well as the system of cities and towns along the border which include the construction of border villages (Tibet Policy Institute 2021, 5). According to the Chinese government-affiliated website Tibet.cn, by the end of 2021, the construction of all 624 well-off border villages in the Tibet Autonomous Region has been finished. Each administrative village has got access to electricity, internet, running water, and hardened roads; the food, clothing, housing, and transportation of the masses have been greatly improved (China Tibet Online 2022).

All the above activities further strengthened the ties between the disputed territory and the occupying state. Hence, it is more difficult to compromise in the future, because the disputed territory in question has been symbolically as well as materially linked to the occupying state. Hence, the building of a border village along the Line of Actual Control by the Chinese government may further escalate the process of entrenchment (Mohan 2021). Not only this but besides entrenching their territorial claims on the disputed border areas these villages on completion, would act as border watch posts for the PLA. It would also help China in limiting cross-border Tibetan migration and, more importantly, would reaffirm the PRC's claims on the disputed territories along the India-China border (Desai 2021, 19).

In times of conflict with India, these infrastructure developments could be effectively used. Most of the time, the Xiaokang (moderately-well-off) villages are linked to infrastructure development, particularly on India's border. Hundreds of examples could be given. To cite one, the Pai-Metok (Pai-Mo) Highway, linking Nyingchi to Metok, north of the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, will be opened in July 2021 (Arpi 2020). Later the above highway was opened in May 2021 (China Tibet Online 2022).

Hence, whenever there is construction work carried out along the Indo-Tibet border by China, it should not be perceived as an isolated event, because China rarely takes any steps which are isolated in nature. The construction of artificial islands and other infrastructure developments around the disputed Islands in the South China Sea is also not an isolated event. These are all related to their political and strategic objectives for the future. In the following paper, China's construction spree in the South China Sea will be discussed.

China's Tentacles in the South China Sea: A Sea of Constructions and Claims

In the 21st century, the South China Sea is another place, where China is undertaking a series of constructions one after another on the islands around the South China Sea. This section of the paper will focus on the Mischief Reef Incident. According to China, she has been late in the race for construction around the South China Sea. However, the kind of frenetic constructions she has undertaken so far has alarmed all the neighbouring countries around the South China Sea, including the United States of America's strategic and geopolitics interests. The dispute involves the overlapping claims of six governments to territorial sovereignty and maritime rights, encompasses the main sea lines of communication that connect Southeast Asia with Northeast Asia, covers large fishing grounds, and may contain vast reserves of oil and natural gas (Fravel 2011). In short, the importance of the South China Sea is best described in *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* authored by the geopolitical analyst Robert D. Kaplan:

The South China Sea functions as the throat of the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans—the mass of connective economic tissue where global sea routes coalesce...The oil transported through the Malacca Strait from the Indian Ocean, en route to East Asia through the South China Sea, is triple the amount that passes through the Suez Canal and fifteen times the amount that transits the Panama Canal. Roughly two-thirds of South Korea's energy supplies, nearly 60 percent of Japan's and Taiwan's energy supplies, and 80 percent of China's crude oil imports come through the South China Sea (Kaplan 2014, 9-10).

All the above factors have contributed to the claims and counter-claims by the countries involved, leading to a whirlpool of tense situations.

China's Steady Policy Shift on the South China Sea from Diplomacy to the Gunboat Diplomacy

China's strategic thinking over the South China Sea has undergone a steady shift since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 to the current situation when China has emerged as the most powerful claimant in the South China Sea dispute. The current claims of sovereignty over the

islands by the PRC (Earlier Republic of China (ROC)) are based on eight facts¹ as claimed by China which date from 1946-1949 period (Granados 2006, 155).

During the initial period, because it was preoccupied with its internal problems and weak naval strength, China's policy towards the South China Sea was almost non-existent. The obvious reason is that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) navy was almost non-existent; it consisted only of elements that had defected from the Nationalist navy...Most PLA soldiers did not know how to fight on the sea (Granados 2006, 162). Without the proper naval superiority, it is very difficult to patrol and control the vast area of the South China Sea. Thus, it might be one of the reasons why the PRC neglected the South China Sea. Hence, in the absence of the means to defend its maritime interests militarily, the PRC felt that it had to push its claims diplomatically, just as the ROC had done in January 1947, when it protested the French occupation of Pattle Island, and again in April 1949, when it protested against Manila's pretensions in the Spratlys (Granados 2006, 163). Hence, the above events clearly show that, militarily, China was not in a position to secure control of the South China Sea and instead decided to push its claims through diplomatic channels. This is best elaborated by Professor Shee Poon Kim, a long-time watcher of the South China Sea dispute, in the following words:

...From 1949 to 1989, China did not formulate a coherent and long-term strategic policy towards the South China Sea, but it was subsumed under China's overall foreign policy objectives in the Cold War era, that is, anti-hegemonism from the 1950s to the 1970s and seeking independence and peaceful coexistence in the 1980s. Therefore, for more than five centuries, from 1433 to 1987, China's policies towards the South China Seas were to a large extent one

1. 1) Civilian and military officials were sent to formally recover the archipelagoes. 2) Administrative organs were established and permanent garrisons deployed in the Paracels and Spratlys. 3) Stone tablets were erected on several islands in an official ceremony. 4) A map of the area with a U-shaped dotted line drawn around the South China Sea was published in 1948.5) A new and detailed list of the names of every insular and archipelagic formation in the South China Sea was published the same year. 6) James Shoal (Zengmu Ansha in Chinese, at 4 degrees latitude North) was again recognised by the ROC government as the southernmost point of China's national territory, as had been proclaimed in 1935. 7) Meteorological stations were established in both the Paracels and the Spratlys and internationally recognised. 8) Chinese nationals continued and increased their economic activities in the area. Source: (Ulises Granados, *Chinese Ocean Policies Towards the South China Sea in a Transitional Period, 1946-1952*, China Review, Vol. 6, No.1, Special Issue on: Science and Technology Development in China (Spring 2006) p.155.)

of neglect until it began to reassert itself through the occupation of seven reefs in the wake of the Sino-Vietnamese clashes over Johnson Reef in March 1988 (Kim 1998, 370).

However, with its steady economic growth over the past many decades, China has now emerged as the next economic superpower followed by its rising military power. Hence, today, to reclaim its lost territories as claimed by China in the South China Sea, China's foreign policies in the South China Sea and elsewhere are guided by gunboat diplomacy.

Chinese Constructions on the Mischief Reef and its Significance

However, gradually China began to change its strategic perception towards the South China Sea. In January 1995, a group of Filipino fishermen reported to Philippine military authorities that they had been detained by Chinese troops on Mischief Reef. This led Manila to discover that platforms consisting of octagonal bunker-type structures, and satellite equipment, had been built by China on the previously unoccupied reef (Storey and Yee 2002, 260). Due to this incident, a Mexican standoff prevailed around the South China Sea. Initially, for a few weeks, China denied the construction of structures on Mischief Reef. Later, China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen claimed that it was built by authorities of Hainan for the convenience of Chinese fishermen around the Spratly Island (Kim 1998, 370).

The Chinese occupation of the Mischief Reef marked a significant change in China's thinking on its political, economic, strategic, and security interests in the South China Sea. Indeed, its policies towards the South China Sea have gone through three distinct phases of development: firstly, the pattern of "low profile" policy in the 1950s and 1960s; secondly, the pattern of growing concern in the 1970s; and thirdly, the pattern of growing assertiveness in the 1980s and 1990s (Kim 1998, 379). The occupation of Mischief Reef by China in February 1995 departed from its previous policy of conciliation through diplomacy. Following the incident, there was a series of diplomatic exchanges and visits of the heads of countries toward the finding of a satisfactory resolution to the Mischief Reef issue. However, despite this series of bilateral diplomacy, things were not happening as per the Philippines' expectations. Aileen San Pablo-Baviera, a Professor at the Asian Centre, University of Philippines has made the following remarks:

Unfortunately, despite this active and reciprocal bilateral diplomacy, the Philippines was not only unable to move China towards a more satisfactory resolution of the Mischief Reef issue, but China even reinforced its presence in October 1998 by building a permanent multistory building in place of the original structures that the Philippines had wanted to be dismantled (Storey and Yee 2002, 260).

Thus, despite all the diplomatic engagements with the Philippines, China continued to upgrade its physical presence on the Mischief Reef. These structures were subsequently upgraded into a permanent military fortress in November 1998. And in May 1996, the PRC extended its baseline claims to the Paracel Islands, thereby extending its claims in the South China Sea by an extra 965,000 square miles (Storey and Yee 2002, 217). Professor Shee Poon Kim (1998) concluded that ... “In this sense, the occupation of Mischief Reef was not a surprise but a rationally calculated move by Beijing, and indeed a manifestation of China’s growing nationalism, economic power, and confidence.”

Professor Kim’s statement may still apply to current China’s strategic behaviours. Similarly, in Doklam too, after 73 days of the standoff between India and China, due to the diplomatic engagements between the two countries, expeditious disengagement of border personnel at the face-off site was agreed upon on 28 August 2017 as per the statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs of India. However, on 5 March 2018, Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharam was quoted in the Indian Express, as saying “Indian and Chinese troops have “redeployed” themselves away from the face-off site in Doklam, and China has undertaken construction of helipads, sentry posts and trenches for its army personnel there” (PTI 2018).

Despite having a series of bilateral diplomatic engagements after the 73 days of standoff, China has continued the construction works and even undertaken the construction of helipads and other military installations. Hence, there are many similarities between the strategic behavior shown by China in dealing with the Philippines and India over territorial disputes.

Hence, as per the arguments put forward by Hassner, through the process of encroachment of material links and symbolic links, one may conclude that China is trying to strengthen its claims through the construction of a series of physical structures over the islands of the South China Sea and others. This is further validated by the current eight claims made by China in the South China Sea dispute (Granados 2006, 155).

In the eight claims made by China, the following three claims are noteworthy in connection to its physical presence: 1) administrative organs were established and permanent garrisons deployed in the Paracels and Spratlys, 2) stone tablets were erected on several islands in an official ceremony, 3) meteorological stations were established in both the Paracels and the Spratlys and which China claims are internationally recognized. The construction of roads and other permanent military installations near the disputed border may become a source of future claims by China. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is another such mass construction that may create more problems than opportunities claimed by China.

The Belt and Road Initiative: an initiative for whom?

Numerous scholars and analysts share the same views about the reasons for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Most of them view BRI's greater advantages for China, thus getting lion's share in the end. Economic factors have been a key influence behind the initiative. Current overcapacity in Chinese steel and construction sectors may be mitigated by the large infrastructure projects that the initiative would require. Chinese domestic development will falter without access to significant energy resources (Policy 2016, 2). Along with its economic goals, China's several strategic goals to be fulfilled. For instance, some projects will also support China's ability to project military strength in the region. The development of the port of Gwadar in Pakistan will give China access to the Indian Ocean for commercial purposes and could serve as a deep-water port for its navy (Meltzer 2017). China's Central Asian security is also strengthened better than before. If completed, the initiative will allow China to have an extensive presence in Central Asia. As a region, Central Asia faces significant security problems such as border security, terrorism, and drug smuggling (Policy 2016, 5). Thus, BRI is viewed by many as concealing China's strategic ambitions, which scares the rest of the world. Even the project's name has generated enough fear, compelling China to later change its name.

The present ambitious pet project of President Xi Jinping, initially called One Belt, One Road (OBOR), now officially changed its name to the Belt and Road Initiative in early 2015. The change of name was implemented because of various interpretations as well as doubts surrounding the word 'One' in its first original English version called 'One Belt One Road.' Where partner countries tend to think of 'One' as the availability of only one land belt and one maritime road. And also, the word 'One' connotes 'China-centered institution-building

(Una Aleksandra 2016). Hence, to avoid further confusion among the partner countries, the name of the project was changed after many deliberations with experts from different organizations.

After putting their heads together and consulting renowned organizations, such as the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came up with a new acronym BRI, better known as 'The Belt and Road Initiative' (Shepard 2017).

Conclusion

The construction of the motorable road in Drokham is not an isolated plan to irritate Bhutan and India. Through the construction of the road, China has already initiated the process of entrenchment as explained by Hassner. Hence, the process of entrenchment through material links (roads) and symbolic links (construction of temples or churches, or any other buildings with emotional and religious attachments) makes territorial disputes more difficult to settle in the future. Not only that, China's strategic thinking and behaviors on the South China Sea remind us that the construction of physical structures is not only about irritating the neighboring countries, but a calculated plan for the creation of strong claims in the future. China had adopted this in Drokham too, where under the shadow of infrastructure development, China has started claiming the area as its own. But this time, Bhutan, supported by the Indian government objected verbally as well as militarily. In both cases, China has overtly started upgrading the military installation even after the series of bilateral diplomatic exchanges. Hence, whatever China undertakes, it is with a calculated reason for the long-term plan to achieve its ambitions. For instance, the current mega-project renamed the Belt and Road Initiative with its network of roads and railways across Central Asia, connecting Europe with China may become a future way for the Chinese people's mass migration in the event of man-made or natural disasters.

Tim Marshall, author of *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know about Global Politics* has made this educated guess, 'If there is mass and long-term unemployment, in an age when the Chinese are a people packed into urban areas, the inevitable social unrest could be – like everything else in modern China- on a scale hitherto unseen.'

One strange thing is, on one hand, China is initiating The Belt and Road Initiative, trying to connect itself with the rest of the world through roads

and maritime routes. While on the other hand, China is building a series of dams one after another mainly in Tibet, trying to divert the water instead of sharing water with the riparian countries with whom China is trying to connect through the Road Initiative. If China wants to connect, the best way is to share the water with the riparian Asian countries through 'The Dam and Water Initiative.' This will allow China not only to share its profit but to share future challenges and make the riparian Asian countries partners in the true sense.

Maybe, next time, China should contemplate the idea of constructing a cultural bridge based on its past cultural similarities and once and for all turn its troubled relationship with its neighbouring countries into a harmonious one.

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A Preliminary Study on the History of Tibet - Monyul Relations, 1680-1914

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Abstract

This article focuses on the preliminary study on Tibet's historical relations with Monyul from the late 17th to early 20th century. It aims to revisit the history of the Indo-Tibetan border relations which has been so far predominately studied within the discipline of security and strategic studies. The Monyul was ruled by the Tibetan government of Ganden Phodrang from 1680 to 1914. The Tibetan authority introduced the new administrative system in the Monyul for collecting taxes and implementing the law and order. After signing of the Simla Convention, the Monyul was legally ceded to British India by Tibet in 1914. After China's invasion of Tibet in 1950, later China asserted its claim over Monyul (Arunachal Pradesh). This article explores the historical sources on Tibet- Monyul relations during the 17th to 20th century to offer alternative narrative challenging China's assertion on the history of Tibet-Monyul relations.

Keywords: Tibet, India, China, Monyul, History, Border

Introduction

The Sino-Indian dispute over the Indo-Tibetan border is one of the most contentious geopolitical disputes in Asia. It is because of the disappearance of Tibet as a strategic buffer between China and India. Soon after the occupation of Tibet, China started to expand its influence in the Himalayan regions. The Chinese strategists projected Tibet as its palm and Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh as five fingers. By controlling Tibet, China asserts its claim over Arunachal Pradesh. This attempt is contested based on the historical relations of the region dealing with Tibet. This paper examines how China appropriates the historical fact dealing with Tibet's relations with Monyul, and also, to find whether Chinese political involvement was seen in the context of Tibet-Monyul Relations during the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet from 1680-1914. This study also brings the significance of traditional

relations between Tibet and Monyul in terms of taxation, customs, inhabitants, and political administration.

After the British military invasion of Tibet in 1904, strategists in the Qing Court perceived the strategic importance of Tibet for security, and insecurity of China's backyard. At the same time, the British had the desire to create Tibet as a strategic buffer between India, China, and Czarist Russia. The geopolitical importance of Tibet was articulated in Charles Bell's book titled *Tibet Past and Present*:

We want Tibet as a buffer to India on the north. Now there are buffers and buffers, and some of them are of very little use. But Tibet is ideal in this respect. With the large desolate area of the Northern plains controlled by the Lhasa Government, central and southern Tibet governed by the same authority, and the Himalayan border states guided by, or in close alliance with, the British Indian Government, Tibet forms a barrier equal, or superior, to anything that the world can show elsewhere (Bell 1998, 224).

Even today, major attention has been focused on the high politics of Tibet and her neighboring region. This popular narrative has overshadowed the historical understanding of Tibet's relations with Monyul. Particularly, most of research studies are dominated within the framework of security and strategic dimensions. There is hardly a spotlight on the centrality of Tibet in the mainstream discourse of border and security studies. This paper also tries to foreground Tibet's relations with Monyul for understanding the nature and process of the Sino-Indian conflict over the Indo-Tibetan border by using an interdisciplinary approach.

By framing the research problem of the subject, there is limited scholarship on the field. It might be safely argued that most of the historical sources are recorded in Tibetan literature. And also, there is a limited scholarships dealing with Tibet's historical relations with Monyul from 1680 to 1914.

One of the significant historical source on Tibet's relations with Monyul during the 17th century can be found in the biography of the 6th Dalai Lama (*Thams cad mkhyen pa Blo Bzang rin chen Tsangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i thung mong phyi'i rnam par thar pa du ku la phro thub rab gsal ser gyi snye ma glegs bam dang po*). The biography was authored by Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705). It was initially published by Ganden Phuntokling woodblock printing in Lhasa. It was later reproduced in Gangtok in 1981. This biography records the early life of the

sixth Dalai Lama from the years 1683 to 1701 (Gyatso 1989). The sixth Dalai Lama (Tseyang Gyatso) was born in Mon Urgenling in 1683. Mon Urgenling is currently located in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Desi Sangye Gyatso recognized him as the reincarnation of the 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso. At the time, Desi Sangye Gyatso was the regent of Tibet. This text holds the most significant historical records on the Tibet- Monyul relations during the Ganden Phodrang government of Tibet.

Denma Gyalsey Tulku has produced the enlarged editions on the Monyul, which enrich the historical writings on Tibet's Monyul relations. His work titled, *The Clear Mirror of Monyul (Arunachal Pradesh): A History of Tawang Monastery (Rta wang dgon pa'i lo rgyus Mon yul gsal ba'i melong)*, was initially published in 1991 by Chahak Jampa Gyatso in Tawang, and later, the Dharamshala based Amnye Machen Institute published its enlarged edition in 2009. The author served as an abbot of Tawang monastery. This historical and literary text brings an account of Monyul in antiquity, its major clans, personalities, and great religious masters, and the founding of the Tawang monastery. It has produced more than fifty-one references including some of rare Tibetan sources.

The Religious History of Bayul Kyimjong is a biography of the 13th Tsono Rinpoche, Jamphal Tenzin Wangchuk, which was published by the Mon Buddhist Culture Preservation Society, West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh in 2002. It provides the spiritual and culture aspects of Tibet's relations with Monyul.

Khenpo Nyima Tashi has provided the enlarged editions on *The Historical Accounts of Monyul Kyimjong*, which was published by Mon Palpung Jangchub Choeckhor Ling Kagyu Society, Tawang district in 2022. This edition elaborates the religious history of Mon. Particularly, he illustrates the rise of the spiritual masters and their contributions in the Mon region.

Based on these Tibetan sources, this study will explore the significance of Tibet's historical relations with Mon. This will be studied through following sub-themes which are (a) the physical geography of Monyul, (b) the political administration of Monyul, (c) taxation, law, and order (d) language and culture and (e) the Simla Convention and Monyul's political transformation.

Tibet's Historical Relations with the Monyul

Tibet's historical relations with Monyul have can be traced since the establishment of the Tibetan Empire. But this paper focuses on Tibet-Monyul relations during the late 17th to early 20th century. According to early Tibetan

sources, Monyul is situated in south Tibet. It was also known as Lho-Mon (Nado 1986), the southern belt of Tibet. Before the emergence of the kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim, Lho-Mon was referred to the people who live in south Tibet. According to the historical sources of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet, Lho-Mon is referred to as the inhabitants in south Tibet which includes Bhutanese and Monpas (Gyalsey 2009). Lho means south in Tibetan and Mon refers to the people inhabiting in the region.

In this paper, the Mon refers only to Tawang and West Kunming districts of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Swargajyoti Gohain, in her study has shown that “in pre-colonial times, the areas now comprising Arunachal Pradesh, except for Tibetan-ruled Tawang and West Kameng, were never formally part of any political state” (Gohain 2020). Since the 17th century, Tawang was one of the most important frontier administrative units of the Tibetan government of Ganden Phodrang. This is illustrated by the two edicts in 1680 and 1731. These edicts were written in Tibetan. The 1680 edict was issued by the 5th Dalai Lama. The issuance of the 1731 edict is a reaffirmation of the 1680 edict, which affirmed the Mon region as an important border region and given primary concern to the monastic community in the Mon region (Tenpa 2018, 212). During the Simla Convention in 1914, Tawang was ceded to the British India.

The Physical Geography of Monyul

In Tibetan terminology, Monyul or Lho Mon is described as the land of Mon, the lower land. The term “Lho Mon” is often found in the biographies of Thangtong Gyalpo and Drukpa Kunley. Both of them were highly revered Buddhist masters in the region. Lobsang Tenpa has extensively written about it in his book titled *An Early History of the Mon Region (India) and its Relationship with Tibet and Bhutan*. He illustrated that Lho Mon as being located in a particular part of the Eastern Himalayas, with the direction of Shar Mon or Lho Mon. It is understood from Tibetan literary sources that Lho Mon is the same as Mon or Monyul, while Shar Mon is part of that Mon region (Tenpa 2018, 224).

The use of term Mon, Lho Mon, and Monyul could be found in numerous Tibetan sources. After examining the usage of these terms, they all referred to the region and its people. According to *The Historical Accounts of Monyul Kyimojong - Volume 4*, the Monpas are the inhabitants who were living in a southern part of Tibet (Tashi 2022).

Monyul was geographically divided into two divisions west Mon and east Mon. The physical setting of the West and East Mon was demarcated by Kom-Thong La (མུ་མཐོང་ལ།), which is situated north-ward of Tawang (Nyima 2022). West Mon was consisted of Dhakpa (དཀཔ།), Pangchen (པང་ཆེན།), and Lhekpo (ལེགས་པོ།). Tawang served as the center of the spiritual and political power of Monyul. East Mon consisted of Nyima Tso Sum (ཉི་མ་ཚོ་གསུམ།), Hoi dang JhangDhak (ཧྲོ་དང་བྱང་དཀའ།), Sangye Dzong (སངས་རྒྱལ་རྫོང་།), Nyungma Dhong (གུམ་མ་བོད་པ།), Tiangma Chugyue (ཐིང་མ་ཚུ་བྱེ།), and Rong Nang (རོང་ནང་།) (Thinley 1983).

The most feasible physical boundary of Monyul during the 17th century was outlined by Bom-La in the north which delimited Tsona and the Indian plains of Assam as the southern border. It took around 15 days on horse ride to cover the length of the region and two or three days of the breadth (Thinley 1983). In the pre-modern days, the distances are measured by amount of time taken by the horse ride.

Monyul was also very rich in natural resources such as minerals, forests, and water. There are five major rivers which are Ni Shang Chu, Pang Ma Chu, Tawang Chu, Pang Nang Chu, and Rong Nang Chu. These rivers still serve as a lifeline for millions of people in the Assam plains. Vast and impenetrable forests are found in every nook and corner of Monyul which kept it isolated for many centuries. Most of the inhabitants of Monyul settled along the banks of rivers for cultivation and many other means of living.

Today, Monyul is situated in the south of Tsona Dzong, east of Bhutan, and northeast of Assam. Tawang became one of the smallest districts of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The traditional administrative power of Tawang has been transferred to Itanagar, the capital city of Arunachal Pradesh. Furthermore, Tawang administrative district is divided into two administrative units: Tawang and Kitpi.

The Political Administration of Monyul

In the early Tibetan sources, particularly during the 7th century, the Mon region was charted in the religious geography of the great 33rd king of Tibet, Choegyal Songtsen Gampo. It was considered as one of Tibet's frontier regions, which came under the domination of Songsten Gonpo's mapping of Tibet. It was known as "Srin mo gan rkyal du nyal ba", the supine demoness. the Monyul was located at the feet of a supine demoness (Gianotti 2010), which was situated in south Tibet where the king Songtsen Gampo built temples for taming the supine demons. At the crest of temples were statues of King

Songtsen Gampo, Belsa and Gyasa, the Nepalese and Chinese queens of the Tibetan king (Thinley 1983).

During the time of Choegyal Tri Ralpachen in the 8th century, a few anti-Buddhist ministers used ruses to get rid of the king's elder brother from the kingdom. The king listened to the advice of these ministers and expelled his elder brother, prince Tsangma, to Lho Mon (Tshedwang 1994). Shakabpa, a Tibetan historian, wrote about this in his political history of Tibet. He wrote that Tri Ralpachen succeeded in having his brother sent to Paro in Bhutan, where he would be ineffective. But Prince Tsangma and his entourage settled in Mon and later married Amy Dondup Gyal's daughter. They had two princes. These two sons controlled fragmented local rulers and founded strong kingdoms. Gradually, their successors ruled across the Mon (Gyalsey 2009).

The political administration of Monyul was directly controlled by Tibet during the Ganden Phodrang government of Tibet, which was founded in 1642. The 5th Dalai Lama became the spiritual and temporal ruler of Tibet. In 1680, the 5th Dalai Lama issued an edict and assigned Merag Lama Lodoe Gyaltsso and Tsona Dzong Chief Namkha Drukdhak to consolidate the political administration of Monyul. And, the Dalai Lama tasked Merag Lama Lodoe Gyaltsso to build a monastery in Monyul. Lodoe Gyaltsso took the personal initiative to build the Tawang Monastery by himself. Subsequently, it became a center for the spiritual and political powerhouse of Mon, which was directly governed by Lhasa. Under the direction of the 1680 edict issued by the 5th Dalai Lama, the Tawang Monastery governed the political administration in the Mon. This portion of the edict is translated by Lobsang Tenpa:

From the time of the Victor, the Omniscient One, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1475-1542), just as the patriarchal lords succeeded each other in turn, so every one of the successive uncles and nephews of the Dpa' bo gdung pa chos rje were the disciplines who upheld the Dge lugs teachings in the Shar Mon region. In particular, it was in accordance with a command from here, when the establishment of the authority of the priest-patron was introduced in Mon. [It was declared that] military measures, such as an invasion, would not be required and so on the basis of a counsel held between the devotee Nam mkha' brug and Merag Lama. [Stretching] down from Snying sangs [La] and up to the Indian border at Dga' gling and from A li, a binding oath was taken in all parts of Eastern, Western, Upper and Lower Mon [Region] (Tenpa 2018, 212).

Based on the 1680 edict, the government of Tibet introduced the thirty-two Tsho (32-units) administrative system in Monyul and appointed heads of respective units (Tsho gan). Tawang monastery had the authority to implement and collect taxes across the Mon region. The successive lineages of jo bo or local chieftains in Tawang, Dirang, Thembang, Khalaktang, Sherdukpen of Shergoan and Rupa regions of Mon. These had been incorporated under the tsho administration (Tenpa 2018, 224). This newly established administrative system was enshrined in the edict. It is elaborated in the following:

From the Fire-Monkey [1656] year onward, some twenty-five years have now passed, during why they [Merag Lama and his monks] have applied themselves solely to the cause of the teaching, without in any way looking to the welfare of the laymen and minks [of Monyul?]. And so [at the end, the following districts] were brought under dominions: La Chen Tsho gsum, Dag pa Tsho Inga, shar Ba mo nu bzhi, Rong mdo gsum, etc. The minor groups of Mon subjects, along the course of the Nyang shang chu [river], and those Indians and inhabitants of the Klo country have also been turned to our own government (Tenpa 2018, 212).

Tawang became the center of the administrative decision-making body with different layers of councils. Shi Drel was the highest decision-making body which consisted of four representatives. They were the lay and ordained managers of the ecclesiastical office of Tawang Monastery, the abbot of Tawang monastery, and the governing council of Tawang monastery (Thinley 1983). These representatives served as the highest decision-making body in Monyul. Shi in Tibetan four and Drel means council, the council of four.

The next highest decision-making body was the Tawang Druk Drel (Thinley 1983). It means the council of six. The two representatives from Tsona Dzong were added to the council of four. Both Shi Drel and Drug Drel, the councils of four and six had the right to decide on issues relating to the borders, taxation, and law and order of Monyul (Thinley 1983). The key members of both councils were appointed by Lhasa.

Minor issues were decided by expanded councils such as the council of seven and council of nine whose members were appointed from the thirty-two tsho units. These councils administered the four major districts of Mon which covered the 32 village units (Thinley 1983). This political-administrative system in Mon was governed by Lhasa till the signing of the Simla Convention in 1914.

Taxation, Law and Order

Accordance with the 1680 and 1731 edicts issued by the government of Tibet, Tawang Monastery collected taxes and imposed law and order in the Mon region. Mostly, two types of taxes were collected summer and winter taxes. These taxes were mainly collected in the form of food grains two times a year, barley in summer and millet in winter. Tawang Monastery also annually collected taxes from the nomads of the region. These taxes were collected in the form of nomadic products such as meat and butter, but there was no uniformity of collecting taxes in the region.

The 1731 edict was issued by the *mi dbang* Pholhane Sonam Tobgye (1689-1747). This edict reaffirmed the authority of Tibet over the Mon region. Regarding the collection of taxations:

The steward [of Tawang monaster] must act according to the legal documents, [collecting taxes] for loads as corvee labor in turn after the completion of the annual trades at Indian dvar, etc., [but] an exemption of taxation of the religious community and [must perform] the necessary renovation of the inner and outer boundary walls of the monastery, etc. [All of these] must be based on the precious edict [issued by] the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, which is reaffirmed by the successive regents. The objectives of all previous seals, the documents, the travel permits and exception is given to the taxation, etc., [and] are kept well until now. Hence, this great endorsement is given in order to securely continue all the successive edicts (Tenpa 2018, 212).

The collection of rice was one of the most important taxes collected by the Tibetan government. Lhasa had directly appointed a special officer for collecting the rice taxation in the region, which was known as a Tsona rice official (མཚོ་སྤྱང་འབྲས་སྤྱོད་པ།). He managed the rice taxation across Monyul. Besides collecting rice, he was also responsible for the cultivation and sale of rice at the annual Udalguri trade fair (Tenpa 2018, 224).

There was a place called Amratulla which shared borders with what in Tibetan documents referred to as 'Shar Mon'. This place was actually under the jurisdiction of Tawang Monastery. Later, it was leased to British India at the annual rent of 1,000 British Indian Rupees. From that rent, Tawang Monastery paid 500 rupees to Lhasa (Thinley 1983). At the same time, the government of Tibet issued license to the tax collectors on which they could freely travel up to Lhasa and down to

Assam without any restrictions. It was amply proved that the territorial sphere of influence of Tibet was extended right up to the plains of Assam.

There was a unique way of tax collection in Monyul. This uniqueness of the taxation system was characterized by the special features of the central Tibetan taxation system and the local customary law which was preserved for nearly three and half centuries.

Before collecting the taxes, Tawang Monastery and Tsona Dzong issued three rounds of letters to the concerned headmen of the villages (Thinley 1983). These letters were called ‘arrow letters’ because they were wrapped around arrows with a feather attached at the end. The gesture of these tax letters and arrows signified honesty and dedication as straight and as upright as an arrow. The feather at end of the arrow signified speed, like that of a bird. Afterward, the tax collectors selected an auspicious day based on the Tibetan lunar calendar and launched forth to collect taxes. The subjects of Mon had to pay two different taxes annually: one to Tawang Monastery and the second to the government of Tibet through Tsona Dzong.

Before the introduction of the Tibetan currency, the people of Mon were using cowrie shells and iron coins as the medium of exchange in trade and business (Thinley 1983). At the beginning of the 20th century, the 13th Dalai Lama introduced the Tibetan currency. Subsequently, the Tibetan currency was circulated in Monyul by replacing cowrie shells and iron coins as the new mode of exchange. At the same time, the Monpas followed the Tibetan barter system. The Tibetan currency was officially used for goods and services in the region till the Indian rupee was introduced.

Culture and Language of Mon

Since the establishment of Tawang Monastery, Monyul was completely incorporated into the Tibetan administration in terms of politics, culture, language, taxation, and law. The reference of culture in this study refers to Tibetan Buddhist culture. Tawang Monastery was the largest monastery in Monyul. It was also considered as the cultural and spiritual center for the people of Mon. Besides, there were several other monasteries such as Tak Lung Gonpa (ཐག་ལུང་དགོན་པ།), Sak Thing Gonpa (སཀ་ཐིང་དགོན་པ།), Dor Lap Gonpa (རོ་ལཔ་དགོན་པ།), and Tsu Gon Gya Gon (བཙུན་དགོན་རྒྱུད་དགོན་པ།) etc. These were managed by Tawang Monastery (Nyima 2022). Even though Geluk was the most influential Tibetan Buddhist School in the region, many of the Monpas followed the Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma schools (Nyima 2022).

Some inhabitants of Mon practiced Bon, the original religion of Tibet. Apart from the popularity of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, there were numerous followers of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. This was because of Nyingma master Uygen Sangpo, who came to Monyul to establish his lineage. Uygen Sangpo built several Nyingma monasteries in Monyul and because of this, the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism flourished in different corners of Monyul. The Pema Lingpa lineage of Nyingma has been preserved and is still practiced today.

Monyul had not only rich natural resources, but it also nurtured distinguished scholars and highly revered personalities who served important roles in Tibetan history. For example, Monpa Lama, Merag Lodoe Gyatso, was one of the best disciples of the 5th Dalai Lama. He was also a distinguished Buddhist scholar, who built the historic Tawang Monastery. The 6th Dalai Lama was born in Urgenling in Mon. He became one of the most controversial Dalai Lamas in Tibetan history, but he was regarded as one of the greatest poets. His poems and songs are still on the lips of the Tibetan people today. Sholkhang Dhondup Phuntsok, born in Mon, was a dynamic Tibetan political figure. He served as one of the cabinet ministers under the 13th Dalai Lama. Ganden Tri Dhak Tulku was born in Urgenling in Mon (Thinley 1983). He was also one of the most revered incarnate lamas in Ganden Monastery in Lhasa.

Despite having different dialects, the Tibetan script was the written language of Mon. There were four major dialects spoken in Monyul such as Dirang dialect (འི་རང་སྐད།), Leh dialect (ལྷོ་སྐད།) Lekpa dialect (ལེགས་པའི་སྐད།) and Tawang dialect (ཁྱད་བར་ཁུལ་གྱི་སྐད།) (Nyima 2022). The Tawang dialect is the most widespread. Lee dialect was spoken only within the Lee community. Lekpa dialect was a mixture of the central Tibetan spoken language and the indigenous Mon dialect.

The Tibetan script was used for studying Buddhist texts and in official documents and correspondence. The Monpas eagerly learned the Tibetan language to understand Buddhist texts and for commercial and administrative purposes. Even today they refer to the Tibetan lunar calendar to identify auspicious dates and months for celebrations, building new houses, fixing marriage ceremonies, prayers, and offerings, business, social gatherings, and festivals (Dorji 2017).

The Simla Convention and Monyul's Political Transformation

The Simla Convention changed the political map of Monyul. The Simla Convention was signed and sealed by the Tibetan plenipotentiary Lonchen

Gaden Shatra Paljor Dorjee and the secretary of the government of British India, Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, in 1914. During the Convention, Tibet and British delegates discussed and demarcated the boundary between Tibet and the North East Frontier of India. Finally, the McMahon Line was drawn as the border between Tibet and British India. Sir Henry McMahon, a British plenipotentiary of the conference, made a note on the memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 30 April 1914 regarding the Indo-Tibet border in the Eastern Himalaya:

After prolonged discussion between Mr. Bell and my Tibetan colleagues, the latter and I exchanged notes, dated the 24th and 25th March which have at last formulated upon a large scale map a clearly-defined frontier extending for some 850 miles along the North-East Frontier of India, from the Irrawaddy-Salween Divide on the east to Bhutan on the west. The conclusion of an agreement in regard to this vast tract of tribal country, and the acceptance by the Tibetans of a recognized boundary, will so lighten our responsibilities, and so materially strengthen our position, that I cannot but regard this definition of the Indo-Tibetan frontier as not the least important and valuable of the results which have been achieved by the work of the conference (Mehra 1979, 173).

At the Simla Convention, an independent and sovereign state of Tibet legally ceded the Tawang region to British India. However, even after the Simla Convention, the government of Tibet exercised de facto power over Tawang. In 1951, under the leadership of Major Ralengnao Khathing, India took full control of Tawang. Later, the Tawang region was incorporated into the North East Frontier Agency.

Despite that, the People's Republic of China regards McMahan Line as an illegal boundary between Tibet and India. This assertion was officially recorded in the book titled *Premier Chou En-lai's letter to the leaders of Asian and African countries on the Sino-Indian Boundary Question on November 15, 1962*. The Chinese Premier Chou En-lai firmly stood on the issue, which he presented that "in the eastern sector, the area disputed by the India Government north of the traditional customary line has always belonged to China. This area comprises Monyul, Loyul, and Lower Tsayul, which are all part of the Tibet region (En-lai 1973). Since then, China asserts its claim over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Conclusion

Despite having the prolonged historical records on Tibet's Monyul relations, the People's Republic of China (PRC) regards the McMahon line as an illegal boundary (En-lai 1973, 6) between Tibet and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. To assert it, the PRC claims that the Simla Convention was signed with the "Local Authorities of Tibet" (En-lai 1973, 6). As a matter of fact, the term local government of Tibet was imposed by the PRC for the first time during the signing of the Seventeen Points Agreement in 1951 dealing with China's pretext negotiating over Tibet affair. Chronologically, the Simla Convention was convened in 1913-1914. The delegates of British, Tibet, and China participated in the Convention on equal footing.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of the PRC. This sort of assertion has distorted the prolonged historical relations between Tibet and Monyul. After China's occupation of Tibet, China asserts its claim over Tawang.

By exploring the historical sources on Tibet's relations with Monyul from the late 17th to 20th century, there was no such record dealing with the Chinese political intervention asserted over the Himalayan regions along the Indo-Tibet border before the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950. Therefore, revisiting the significance of Tibet's historical relations with Monyul is relevant to the current context of the Sino-Indian conflict over the Indo-Tibetan border in the Himalaya.

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The Climate Change Impacts on Tibet: An Analysis of Key Research Findings on the Cryosphere

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Abstract

Tibet is often referred to as the third pole and water tower of Asia, the term itself signifies the importance of the Tibetan Plateau. Before China invaded Tibet, its ecology was protected by Tibetan nomads and herders with their traditional knowledge through sustainable methods. In recent decades, Tibet is seriously impacted by climate change and it is getting more severe. The climate change impacts on the Tibetan plateau had increased in recent decades and especially impacts on the cryosphere have severely increased. The cryosphere which is the source of Asia's major rivers and water source to many downstream areas are retreating in recent decades. The increased climate change impacts on the cryosphere including glacier melt, permafrost degradation, and snow reduction largely impact water availability and food security in countries that receive water that emerge from Tibet. Besides, socioeconomic development that will be threatened by increasing climate change impacts in Tibet, extreme climate change can cause an unprecedented natural disaster. The Tibetan plateau is already witnessing unprecedented natural disasters over the last few decades. According to scientific consensus, anthropogenic activities since the industrial revolution have led to the climate crises that we are facing today. This paper will examine key reports and research papers on climate change and its impacts on Tibet. It will also analyze key scientific papers on changing patterns of climate and its implication for Tibet.

Keywords: Tibet, Climate Change, Cryosphere, Climate Change Impacts, Natural Disasters

Introduction

Since the Industrial Revolution, there have been increased Green House Gases GHG in the atmosphere and a rise in temperature that has changed the global climate and is called climate change. This anthropogenic climate change can be

traced back to two hundred years ago when the Industrial revolution started and the rise of industry and technology during the 1800s (Joseph F.C. DiMento 2014) . According to scientists, climate change is attributed to human activities and they refer to this as anthropogenic GHG emission which means emission mainly generated by human activities such as burning fossil fuels.

For several decades, the Tibetan Plateau, surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the world and often known as the roof of the world, is warming at a rate twice the global average due to global climate change. The plateau is one of the most sensitive areas to climate change (L. T. Tandong Yao 2020) and also the place to observe for early warning signals of global warming. The warming on the plateau continued even during the global warming hiatus between 1998 to 2014 (ICMOD 2019).

In the last few decades due to climate change, Tibet is experiencing extreme changes in its weather patterns. This change in climate has severely impacted Tibet's cryosphere. The cryosphere in the Tibetan plateau holds the largest amount of frozen freshwater after the two polar regions in the world. This cryosphere regulates and provides water support to many Asian countries. Since Tibetan Plateau is warming in the last several decades, consequently degradation of the cryosphere has increased in Tibet.

Many research papers concluded that the Tibetan plateau has experienced warming since the mid-1950s (Xiaodong Liu 2000, F. E. Meixue Yang 2010). The warming on the plateau occurred earlier than the warming in Northern Hemisphere which began in the mid-1970s. For instance, the increased rate of annual mean temperature and the winter mean temperature over the plateau was 0.16 degree Celsius and 0.32 degrees Celsius between 1955 to 1996. For the same period, the warming rate in the northern hemisphere was 0.054 K decade⁻¹. The rate of warming on the plateau, therefore, exceeds Northern Hemisphere and the same latitudinal zones (F. E. Meixue Yang 2010, Xiaodong Liu 2000).

Significant warming on the plateau has led to intense and rapid retreat of the cryosphere and glaciers had largely retreated. Large retreating of glaciers on the plateau indicates the rise in temperature over the last few decades (F. E. Meixue Yang 2010, Xiaodong Liu 2000). According to scientific consensus, anthropogenic activities, involving greenhouse gas GHG emissions are the main cause that has led to anthropogenic climate change. In the last few decades of the 20th century, most of the warming that has been observed is caused by increases in anthropogenic GHG concentrations (ICMOD 2019).

This increase in GHG emissions will cause changes in regional hydrological regimes of the cryosphere.

The impact on the cryosphere such as glacier retreat and permafrost degradation has increased on the plateau and if such changes on the cryosphere will remain the same or exacerbate, its effect will not be suffered by the plateau alone, and billions of people will face changes in water supply and modify atmospheric circulation over half the planet (Qiu 2008).

Water resources from the high mountains can be impacted by the increase in temperature because the increasing temperature will change the precipitation pattern. Increasing temperature will cause more evaporation, leading to increased atmospheric moisture content and changing the precipitation pattern. These changes in the pattern will ultimately cause water problems for humans, agriculture, and disturb seasonal weather (ICMOD 2019).

Tibetan Plateau is warming at a rate twice the global average as observed by different findings including the IPCC report. The warming rate of the average annual mean temperature on the third pole from 1970 to 2014 was at the rate of 0.35°C per decade. It was noted that the warming in the region started in the early 1950s which was much earlier than in the northern hemisphere which started in the mid-1970s. It was observed that a rate of $0.16^{\circ}\text{C decade}^{-1}$ warming was noticed between 1955 to 1996. A sudden temperature rise was observed during the mid-1980s and the 1990s was the time when the third pole faced the most dramatic rise in temperature (Y. X. Tandong Yao 2019).

Another paper, jointly authored by Fujun Zhou with his colleague was published in February 2022. They found that the significant warming in Tibet was experienced from the 1950s, with temperatures increasing at an average rate of 0.021°C/yr – 0.025°C/yr . From 1970 to 2019, Tibet witnessed rapid warming, and the most dramatic warming occurred in the 1990s (M. Y. Fujun Zhou 2022).

Based on the research titled, Observed Changes in Extreme Temperature and Precipitation Indices on the Tibetan Plateau Between 1960–2016, majority of Tibet warmed statistically from the mid-1950s, and surface air temperature increased by 1.8°C which is 0.36°C per decade between 1960–2007. From 1979 to 2012, the annual temperature on the Tibetan Plateau increased to $0.42^{\circ}\text{C decade}^{-1}$. The rate of warming on the third pole was found higher than the warming averages for the Northern Hemisphere and the same latitudinal zone (Xiangwen Gong 2022).

ICIMOD published a report titled Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment. The report highlighted that even if the global mean annual air temperature is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius which is above the pre-industrial level, the Hindu Kush Himalaya will be warm by 1.80 ± 0.40 °C and increased regional temperature will 2.2 °C \pm 0.4 °C for the Karakoram, 2.0 °C \pm 0.5 °C for central Himalaya and 2.0 °C \pm 0.5 °C for southeastern Himalaya (ICMOD 2019).

The Himalayas is prone to the sensitivity of climate change because it is said that summer snowfall is more likely to turn into rain than winter snowfall (UNDP 2021). More than 80 percent of annual precipitation in the central and eastern part of the Himalayas is received from the summer monsoon and contrary to that, more than half of the annual precipitation on the Karakorum and Hindu Kush Mountain ranges receives from the winter snowfall (ICMOD 2019).

Overall, the rate of warming on the Tibetan plateau was observed earlier and higher than in the rest of the globe. Due to climate change, its impacts on the cryosphere have widely increased on the plateau. The plateau is important for the global climate because the Tibetan plateau can influence the Asian summer monsoon system (ICMOD 2019) and global climate through thermal and mechanical dynamics (F. E. Meixue Yang 2010). The Tibetan plateau with Hindu Kush Himalaya exerts significant influence on the Asian summer monsoon system (ICMOD 2019).

Climate change and the Tibetan Plateau

Based on different reports and research findings, the adverse impact of climate in Tibet has accelerated in recent decades. IPCC's special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate highlighted the extreme changing regional climate on the plateau. Climate change impacts on the cryosphere are related changes in temperature and precipitation. There are many recent studies on the Tibetan plateau and all of them signify that the Tibetan plateau has been undergoing serious climate change impacts. Cryosphere which is very important for the high mountain areas including the Tibetan plateau which is situated 4,000 meters above sea level is rapidly retreating in glaciers, and permafrost degradation due to rapid warming. The depletion of the cryosphere on the plateau is a manifestation of temperature rise and climate change.

Due to climate change and its adverse impact, the plateau is experiencing severe changes in its climate and weather pattern. There has been a shift in the number of cold and warm days. The number of extremely cold days, and cold nights, has decreased, and conversely, the number of warm days and warm nights has significantly increased (Xiangwen Gong 2022, ICMOD 2019).

90 percent of the increased precipitation is received during May and September, which keeps Tibet cold and dry during winter, but now the temperature of winter has changed and it is observing a higher than usual temperature. It has seen increase in maximum and minimum air temperature on the plateau. The rate of minimum air temperature is rising more than twice that of the maximum air temperature. The increased temperature was observed in all four seasons but the rate of increased temperature is most noticeable during winter (X. W. Meixue Yang 2019, ICMOD 2019). It is not just temperature that has been increasing over the recent decades, precipitation is also changing within the period. Since the 1960s, the Tibetan plateau has observed increased precipitation, and from 1960 to 2010, the rate of increased precipitation on the plateau was observed at $3.11 \text{ mm decade}^{-1}$ (ICMOD 2019, X. W. Meixue Yang 2019). Annual and cold season precipitation has increased on the plateau over the recent decades (ICMOD 2019). Generally, there has been an increase in precipitation over the plateau but this cannot be generalized because the rate of increased precipitation is not uniform throughout the plateau.

In a snow-dominated region, the effect of river discharge depends on temperature and precipitation (T. P. Barnett 2005). Changes in temperature and precipitation are causing the changes in timing and volume of water runoff. The normal seasonal melt water from glaciers in Tibet provides a year-round water supply to many regions, especially during the dry season (SCHR 2021). But now, the temperature rises on the plateau with the rapidly depleting cryosphere is impacting the earlier runoff. This affects social and economic development of the population in the future. Likewise, temperature changes are shifting the timing of runoff, precipitation changes are therefore affecting the amount of water availability (T. P. Barnett 2005, UNDP 2021). The temperature changes will also influence solid precipitation due to which the plateau is receiving more rainfall instead of snow recently. T.P. Barnett with other researchers published a research paper on the potential impacts of a warming climate on water availability in snow-dominated regions and they write: “The projected changes in temperature therefore strongly imply future changes of seasonal runoff patterns in snowmelt-dominated regions. Taken together, these impacts mean less snow accumulation in the winter and an earlier peak runoff in the spring.”

A study was carried out to understand perspectives of climate change and its impacts on the plateau on basis of regional differences by Anja Byg and Jan Salick. They interviewed people who are residing in six villages in Dechen County, Kham, Tibet which is currently administrated under the Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China. Their documented study highlighted that "some observations were more consistently mentioned by most people (e.g., warming temperatures, less snow, and glacial retreat), while there was much more variation in other observations (e.g. river levels and landslide incidences). However, in most cases, general tendencies can be discerned. Thus, most people indicated that the annual amount of snow, as well as rain, had declined and that the length of the snowy season was reduced (starting later and ending earlier); while no clear pattern emerged about the timing and length of the rainy season." (Anja Byg 2009).

The Cryosphere on the Tibetan plateau

The cryosphere on the Tibetan Plateau which mainly comprises glaciers, snow, and permafrost is a reservoir of the largest mass of frozen freshwater outside the two polar regions and is called the third pole (SCHR 2021, J. C. Baiqing Xu 2009). Seasonal melting from the cryosphere ensures a consistent water supply to different regions in South and Southeast Asia. The plateau with its surrounding mountain ranges including the Himalaya, Karakorum, Pamir, and Tien Shan is the source of Asia's major rivers and water resources to many downstream countries (SCHR 2021). Rivers coming from Tibet which include Indus, Brahmaputra, Yangtze and Yellow river that provide water supply to over billion population (Walter W Immerzeel 2010).

One of the key changes in Tibet due to climate change is its impact on the cryosphere which includes glacier melting, permafrost degradation, and snow cover reduction. Although melting of glaciers is observed globally including in the Arctic, Antarctic, and Caucasus. However, the depletion of the cryosphere in Tibet will have larger implications affecting a larger population (UNDP 2021).

The collapse of massive twin glaciers in 2016 in Tibet was reported in IPCC's special report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a changing climate. The report ascribes this to climate change. This is one such case of climate change having a serious impact on the cryosphere (IPCC 2019). Many more climate change impacts on the cryosphere have recently increased on the Tibetan plateau.

A recent report on the scientific Assessment of the Third Pole Environment was issued on 22 April 2022. This is the first comprehensive scientific report on the third pole by the UNEP. This report highlighted climate change impacts on the cryosphere including a decrease in snow cover, increased permafrost degradation, Glacier melting, and increasing lakes expansion on the plateau. For instance, the rate of decrease in snow depth on Nyenchen Tanglha was 0.1–0.2 centimeters per year, and wetlands reduction in Sanjiangyuan and Dzoige was observed. The report also highlighted the degradation of permafrost on the plateau and recent changes in temperature and precipitation. Changes in temperature and precipitation over the plateau were also highlighted, 0.3°C per decade and 0.76 percent per decade between 1960–2018 (UNEP 2022).

The plateau's cryosphere has a very vital role in balancing ecology with its interaction with regional hydrology, water balance, and carbon cycle process. Due to cryosphere that has potential to modify regional hydrology and trigger natural disasters, on cryosphere will also affect far reaching population. The Tibetan plateau is vulnerable to climate change, and its impact on water availability and food security in Asia is not equal among the basins. Because of large populations, irrigated agriculture, and melt water dependent on Indus and Brahmaputra basins, the effect of climate change on those two river are basins is higher (Walter W Immerzeel 2010).

The consequences of the retreating cryosphere on the plateau will be felt not in the region alone, it gives positive feedback to climate change by releasing substantial GHG into the atmosphere and further increases the severity of global warming (EDD 2009, X. W. Meixue Yang 2019). Jane Qiu reported in 2008 by stating that 82 percent of the plateau's glaciers had retreated within the past half century (Qiu 2008).

Few studies have projected the future climate scenario of HKH under limiting global average temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius. They forecasted that if the current rate of emission will remain the same, two third of Himalayan glaciers and one-third of glaciers in high-mountain Asia will be lost by end of this century (UNDP 2021).

Most Noticeable Climate Change Impacts on Tibet's cryosphere

Lake expansion and climate change

Since the 1960s, Tibet is warming at the rate of 0.35 degree Celsius per decade

due to climate change. This resulted in the rapid melting of an estimation of 36, 800 glaciers and approximately 1.5 million km² of permafrost. Due to the melting of ice and the increased amount of melt water, the endorheic lakes that are largely fed by melt water had expanded. Between 1970 to 2010, an increased area of 34 percent in lakes was observed. During the same period, the most expanded rise in areas of lakes was noticed in the central and northern Plateau (Yonten Nyima 2019). The expansion of lakes in the source of areas of three rivers, the Yellow, Yangtze, and Mekong was also found. The observation of expanding lakes in source areas of three rivers on the plateau has been caused by increasing glaciers melting under global warming (ICMOD 2019).

The expansion of lakes in Tibet is the result of recent climate change. Within the past several decades, the glaciers and snow in Tibet are reducing in its size. One such case study is the expansion of Serling Lake which is an endorheic Salt Lake located in Nagchu, Tibet. This was studied by interacting with people whose lives have been directly impacted by the expanded lake. They observed the changes in lake Serling in the 1960s and gradual expansion from the early 1970s. From their perspective, lake expansion has not just impacted the ecosystem, but their livelihoods have been seriously affected. Pastoralists realized the effect of climate change after the incident that took place on the first of September, 2003. During that year, the expansion of the lake was so large that it crested Dobre hill which is usually between Serling Lake and Gopshe Lake. The expansion of the lake that crossed above the hill had led to the loss of pasture, livestock, and houses of fifty households. The rangeland and vegetation adversely degraded due to expanded lake in areas. The spring pasture is very important for pastoralists and the pasture is the main source of grazing fields for their livestock. Their livelihood is dependent on the productivity of the livestock and high-quality pasture. Due to abrupt changes in lake level, high-quality pasture has degraded through the inundation of saline water. Even the plants that normally grow in areas are not growing and the number of livestock has reduced. How far climate change impact can affect society, the economy, and the environment? The single example of an increased level of lake Serling has enormously affected on people's lives. This include; nearly half (120 km²) of the total rangeland allotted to them by the Chinese government, which is 267 km² was lost by 45 percent. In addition to that, 14 out of 85 households that are 16 percent had relocated by 2016. The productivity of surrounding vegetation is getting poor which stops plants from growing. The reduced grazing land has ultimately reduced livestock populations. From 2003 to 2018, 334 sheep equivalent units per year has reduced.

But why has Lake Serling expanded? According to an informant interviewed by the researcher who published the paper mentioned above explained the reason for the expansion of the lake:

“In our place, there are two snow-capped mountains. One is Mayo Kava in the southwest and the other is Gyakang in the south. We noticed the snow on the snow-capped mountains has been melting a lot since around 2000. Today, as you can see, they have only a little snow on the top. In the case of Gyakang, it now maybe has only one-third of its snow. In the past there was snow near the sky-burial site halfway up the mountain, which you might have seen. Rivers from Gyakang, such as Shentsa Tsangpo, Yudrug Tsangpo, finally flow into Dutso Serling after they first flow into Lake Chargu and Lake Tso Ngonmo, constantly adding water to Dutso Serling.”

The expanded area of this particular lake is visible by studying open-source maps of this lake taken over some time on google earth. The largest mean increases in lake level rise for Serling Tso was found 0.41 ± 0.04 m/yr. (Fanny Brun 2020). Between the 1970s to 2010s, the area of Serling Tso increased from 1640.0 km² to 2222.0 km² and the level increased by 11.8–12.5 m (MENG Kai 2011).

Mean lake level changes for the entire plateau were observed at 0.2 m/year (Guoqing Zhang 2011). However, many research papers explained that glacier melting alone is not a primary reason for the overall lake expansion on the plateau. This is because glacier's mass loss at specific periods doesn't match the level of expansion. Three uncertainties have been identified which makes it unable to explain glaciers melting as a primary reason for the lake expansion. First, the dynamics of expanded lakes are found equal between a glacier and a non-glacier-fed lake. Secondly, the pattern of glacier's mass loss doesn't correspond with an expansion of lakes. Thirdly, different lakes that have uneven contributions from the glacier supply are showing a uniform pattern of expansion (Fanny Brun 2020, Yanbin Lei 2017). However, glacier melting play a very vital role in the expansion of lake.

A decade ago, Namtso Lake was bigger than Serling. However, due to increased glacial melt water, rainfall, and reduced evaporation, Serling Lake has eventually surpassed Namtso and it is recently the largest lake on the plateau (CGTN 2020).

For instance, Tso Mapham on the plateau has shown a decrease in water level and surface area. Between 1972 to 1999 and from 2000 to 2012, this

lake reduced its area by 3.5 km² and its water level by 0.09 m. For the period between 2000 to 2012, 9.6 mm of mean annual precipitation was found lower. Therefore, precipitation changes are considered a major factor for the expansion of the lake in Tibet (WU Yanhong 2017, Yanbin Lei 2017). Even though some lakes have expanded because of glacier melting as a major cause but the overall expansion of lakes on the plateau is caused by increased or decrease in precipitation and many pieces of evidence had shown that. In the Himalaya subregion, the shrinkage of the lake corresponds with reduced precipitation, and on the interior of the plateau, growing lakes correspond to increased precipitation from the late 1990s.

It was difficult to identify the major cause for lake expansion on the plateau but it was obvious that regional climate change on the plateau including precipitation, vapor, and associated runoff with the melting of a glacier are causing the lake level changes on the plateau. Overall changes in lake level are associated with climate factors (Baojin Qiao 2019).

Gabriel Lafitte had written an article on Tibetan nomads who are caught between climate change and government conservation that was published in *Minority and Indigenous Trends* 2019. He has written that “For thousands of years, lake levels across Tibet have been slowly falling, as monsoon rains reaching into Tibet from the Bay of Bengal through the Himalayas have steadily reduced in intensity. Now, especially in the land of lakes of northern Tibet, that trend has reversed. The summer of 2018 was one of the wettest known in Tibet, and Chinese scientists now worry about lakes breaking their banks and flooding far below” (Lafitte 2019).

Permafrost Degradation

Permafrost is an important component of the global cryosphere, approximately 24 percent of the land surface in the northern hemisphere is covered by permafrost (OA Anisimov 1996). Permafrost is widespread in other regions of the northern hemisphere such as the Arctic and boreal regions but the permafrost that is underlain on the Tibetan plateau is alpine (Huijun Jin 2000) and the largest alpine permafrost in the world (Taihua Wang 2020). High altitude permafrost on the plateau is also the largest permafrost region on the middle and low latitudes of world (C. Mu 2015, Youhua Ran 2022, NAN Zhuotong 2003).

Permafrost is a ground that remains at or below 0 degrees Celsius for at least two or more consecutive years. The thickness of permafrost on the plateau

varies between 1 to 130 m and permafrost temperature varies between -0.5 and -0.35 degree Celsius (F. E. Meixue Yang 2010). Permafrost has warmed and degraded in recent decades on the plateau (IPCC 2019). The plateau is experiencing increased permafrost temperature, increased active layer thickness and decreased permafrost areas (LI Ren 2012, Xin Li 2008) and increased ground temperature due to climate change (IPCC 2019). GPR survey conducted in Xidatan on the plateau in 1975 and according to survey, permafrost areas had shrunk from 160.5 km² to 141.0 km² about 12 percent (Xin Li 2008).

Li and Chen used altitude model to simulate permafrost distribution on the Tibetan plateau and their result showed that the reduction of plateau's permafrost will not be significant within 20 to 50 years. However, more than 58 percent of permafrost areas will reduce by 2099 if the air temperature increase by an average of 2.91 degree Celsius and almost all the permafrost that is extended in southern and eastern plateau will diminish (LI Xin 1999). Nan, Li and Chen had also predicted the future permafrost occurrence within 50 and 100 years. They had predicted that 8.8 percent of permafrost areas will shrink by next 50 years if air temperature on the plateau rise to 0.02 degree Celsius per year and 13.4 percent of permafrost areas will disappear within 100 years in comparison to existing permafrost that was 1.202×10^6 km² on the plateau (NAN Zhuotong 2003).

There are many infrastructures development in Tibet, particularly on plateau's permafrost regions. One such example of permafrost on the plateau is over the Siling to Lhasa highway and Gormo to Lhasa railway. The construction of Gormo to Lhasa railway started in 2001, (NAN Zhuotong 2003) and the railway was built on a length of 550 km of continuous and 80 km of discontinuous permafrost. In recent decades due to climate change and increasing human activities, permafrost underneath highway and railway are rapidly warming (M. Y. Fujun Zhou 2022). For instance, the ground temperature and active layer thickness of the permafrost that lie under the highway have changed. For the past forty years, the active layer thickness of permafrost under highway between 1981 to 2010 has varied on average by 13.3 cm (LI Ren 2012). Since 1996, the ground temperature at 6.0 m depth over the highway has increased by 0.08–0.55 degree Celsius (Lin Zhao 2020).

Many researchers have done studies on the permafrost on the plateau and all these studies have observed that permafrost on the plateau is widely degrading. Degrading permafrost can cause high environmental damage. There are many engineering constructions that were built on permafrost regions

and those are now under the serious risk of damaging or collapsing due to increased degradation in permafrost area. There was the increased formation of thermokarst and a thaw slump on the plateau. Increasing thermokarst lakes on the plateau will also affect the carbon cycle by emitting methane gas from the anaerobic decomposition of organic material preserved by permafrost (Jing Luo 2015). There is a natural cycle between the atmosphere and terrestrial ecosystem in which wetlands and permafrost act as carbon sequesters. A large amount of organic matter is stored in permafrost, and almost one-third of soil organic carbon is stored in permafrost (Qiu 2008). While permafrost is degrading on the plateau, it releases GHG into the atmosphere by the decomposition organic matter in soil (Taihua Wang 2020). The permafrost thaw releases GHG into the atmosphere is not just disturbing the regional carbon cycle and its effect on the region, this emission of GHG is exacerbating climate change by feedback mechanism (Hongkai Gao 2021, Qiu 2008).

In a paper authored by Fujun Zhou and other researcher, they had described the cause of permafrost warming on the plateau and according to them, long-term changes in climate and increasing human activities are the two main factors that are attributed to warming permafrost. Increased mean annual temperature and precipitation, and glacier melt caused water level rise of lakes, soil erosion, changes in vegetation cover, and earthquake disturbance are some natural factors that are leading to warm. On the other hand, construction projects, increasing tourists, CO₂ emission, and the effect of town hot islands are some of the human-made factors that have warmed the permafrost. However, the impact of natural factors will cause greater loss and for longer term (M. Y. Fujun Zhou 2022).

The permafrost plays an important role in the plateau's ecosystem by means of its correlation with the hydrological cycle, runoff generation, and biochemical processes. According to the report 'climate change on the third pole' by the Scottish center for Himalayan Research, they described how permafrost help in supplementing river flow and providing moisture to vegetation and plants within a thin active layer. "The existence of a continuous layer of permafrost acts as a barrier, preventing water runoff from snow, rain, and glacial melt from sinking into underlying unfrozen soil, and bedrock. As a consequence, melt water from snow and glacial melt tends to flow close to meltwater seeping through the active layer towards river headwaters, supplementing river flow and supplying moisture to nearby grass and vegetation growing on a thin active layer" (SCHR 2021).

Permafrost act as an aquitard or impermeable layer which controls the downward movement of precipitation or glacier melt controls infiltrating into the groundwater and supplements the stream flow and provides adequate surface soil moisture for vegetation growth (Wang Shaoling 1999). With the increasing permafrost degradation on the plateau, the vegetation coverage and alpine ecosystem are impacted. One such example of vegetation loss, alpine meadows, and increased surface desertification was found in the source area of the Yellow River. The source area of the Yellow River is also a core zone of the newly established Sanjiangyuan national park. This area had witnessed several vegetation reductions, increased desertification, and grassland degradation. Since the 1990s, permafrost degraded with an increase in active layer thickness and melting of ground ice. The area is affected by increased air temperature and extreme weather events (Xiaoying Jin1 2022).

Wang and Jin had done research on permafrost degradation and its environmental impacts on the Tibetan plateau. They observed that areas of permafrost are reducing on the plateau and gave examples of reduced permafrost areas on Siling–Lhasa highway and Maduo County in Tibet. They write: “the lower limit of permafrost along the Siling –Lhasa Highway has moved 12 km northward at the southern lower limit, whereas it has moved 3 km southward at the northern lower limit. In the vicinity of Maduo in north-eastern Tibet the horizontal change of permafrost zones is 15 km”. According to a 1975 island permafrost map of the southern part other Siling-Lhasa highway, the areas of permafrost were reduced from 64.8 km² to 41.72 km² in an investigation done in 1996.

Glacier Melt

One of the most noticeable impacts of climate change on the plateau’s cryosphere is glacier melting. The plateau has lost many glaciers until now (L. T. Tandong Yao 2012). For example, the Rongbuk and Zepu glaciers on the Tibetan plateau (EDD 2009). According to the paper that studied on different glacier status on the Tibetan plateau and surroundings, many glaciers on the plateau had resulted in mass loss in its length and area including Ata, Parlung and several other glaciers (L. T. Tandong Yao 2012). Glaciers on other regions in the world are also affected by climate change but the rate of glacier melting on the plateau is very alarming that it could be disappear by mid-century (J. C. Baiqing Xu 2009). To retain fresh water supplies and other global benefits, glacier that store water on the plateau has to be protected (J. C. Baiqing Xu 2009).

For instance, glaciers between the Himalayas and Karakorum are responding differently to climate change. Since the 1970s most of the glaciers in the eastern, central, and western Himalayas have decreased but glaciers in the western Himalayas have decreased at higher rate than the eastern and central Himalayas. While glaciers on Karakorum has remain stable over same period (Zhiguo Li 2016). Between 1970s to 2000s, the most pronounced glacial shrinkage, both in length and area was detected on the southern Tibetan plateau. The area was reduced at a rate of $0.57\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$ and length was at a rate of 48.2 m yr^{-1} (L. T. Tandong Yao 2012).

Many research papers reported that the rate of glaciers melting on the Tibetan plateau cannot be generalized. The Tibetan plateau is showing a heterogenous rate of glacier mass loss. In the Himalayas and southern part of the Tibetan plateau, glaciers are retreating more than the interior Tibetan plateau's glaciers. Besides retreat of glaciers that decreases from the Himalayas or margin to the interior of the Tibetan plateau, eastern Pamir is the least to lose its glacial mass (UNEP 2022, X. W. Meixue Yang 2019).

Between the 1960s to 2000 within forty years, areas of glaciers on the plateau have decreased area by 3790 km^2 which means the average thickness of glacier has thins annually by 0.2 cm (X. W. Meixue Yang 2019). A similar observation about the rate of glaciers melting on the plateau was reported by ICIMOD published the Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment report. Tibetan plateau shows regional glacier loss, a smaller rate of -21 percent was observed in the interior of Tibet and -47.7 percent was observed in the upper Indus River basin (ICMOD 2019).

Glaciers are a very important cryosphere on the Tibetan plateau that is the origin of many rivers that run down into different regions in Asia. Indus, Brahmaputra, and Ganges are rivers whose melt water contributions from glaciers are different from each other. Although the Brahmaputra originated from the Tibetan plateau and flows down into India and Bangladesh, the river's dependence on glaciers is lower than the Indus River. Indus receives the most glacier and ice melt water that runs into India and Pakistan. 72 percent of Indus water originates from the cryosphere. Out of which 46 percent from snow and 32 percent from glaciers. This particular river and Ganges together provide irrigation support to more than 100 million farmers in India and Pakistan (UNEP 2022). The Indus River is also the most important source of water in Pakistan (ICMOD 2019) and it originates from Tibet.

Mountain glacier has strongly responded to recent climate change. In the third pole regions, a pronounced reduction in glaciers' mass balance was observed from the 1950s. Thereafter from the 1970s, a steady reduction in size and areas of glaciers on the third pole was noticed (SCHR 2021).

Due to climate change, glaciers on the Tibetan plateau are melting but how long this rapid melting will continue? There will be one time at which glaciers will permanently disappear or melting will be highly reduced. After which peak water will reach. Peak water is a turning point after which melt water supply from glaciers will slowly reduce and ultimately stops once the glaciers disappear (IPCC 2019). Peak water for the major rivers that originated from the third pole and flow into different regions of Asia is estimated to occur by 2030 to 2050 if emission rate is not reduce (L. T. Tandong Yao 2020, Matthias Huss 2018). A recent study estimated that peak water for the Indus headwater is likely to occur around 2070 (Matthias Huss 2018).

Glaciers store chemical contaminants such as mercury which will be highly destructive to humans and animals when it is released from the melting glaciers (IPCC 2019). Also, the rapid melting of glaciers will cause formation of new lakes. These rapid changes in glaciers will even bring increase glaciers related disasters such as glacier collapse, glacier lake outburst floods. On the Tibetan plateau, this kind of glaciers disasters had accelerated over several years. Within a single year in 2016 on 17 July and 21 September, twin glaciers avalanche occurred in the Ruthok in Ngari, Tibet. Not just that, on October 17 and 29 in 2018, two rock and glacier avalanches occurred in the Sedongpu Basin which is upstream of the Yarlung Tsangpo River in the Tibetan Plateau.

Conclusion

The plateau that is situated at the highest altitude in the world, with an extremely cold climate is now experiencing a warming rate, two times the global average. The plateau is simultaneously facing severe increase in climate change impact, and those impacts on the cryosphere have become very noticeable and evident. Occurrence of natural disasters on the plateau has become more frequent. Climate change impacts on the plateau will continue or can become worse. Therefore, adaptation measures have to be taken to mitigate challenges posed by climate change impacts.

It is very important to include local community knowledge that reflects local concerns and local conditions which can give valuable contributions or relevant information to meet the challenges of climate change. A more comprehensive

and diverse research is needed to understand the impacts of global climate change on Tibet.

The Tibetan Plateau is an important source of water for major rivers that runs down to different south and Southeast Asian countries. Cryosphere that is rapidly depleting in Tibet needs to be protected to sustain the water availability in the future. The increasing depletion of the cryosphere on the Tibetan plateau will not just cause problems for Tibetans, but can be detrimental for over a billion peoples who are depended on Tibet's cryosphere.

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China's National Interests in Transboundary Water Resources: A Case Study of the Yarlung Tsangpo

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Abstract

China's national interests in each transboundary river are different and are mainly determined by the benefit it derives from the river system. As an upstream superpower of Asia's major rivers, China's national interests and policies on its international rivers have implications beyond its national boundary. Therefore this paper seeks to identify China's national interests and its policies in Transboundary Rivers. The paper has used the case study of the Brahmaputra River to assess its national interests in the Brahmaputra River which was shared between Tibet, India, and Bangladesh. Understanding these national interests will offer a useful insight into its behavior and calculation behind why China has not signed any transboundary water treaty with India.

Keywords: national interests, Transboundary Rivers, Brahmaputra River, transboundary water treaty.

Introduction

'National interest' is a key concept in International Relations. National interests encompass the political interests, security interests, economic interests, cultural interests, and other interests of a country (Liu 2013). According to Morgenthau "the meaning of national interest is survival-the protection of physical, political and cultural identity against encroachments by other nation states" (Navari 2016). The term national interest is very vague and ambiguous and carries a meaning according to the context in which it is used.

In terms of Transboundary Rivers, each riparian country has an objective geographically-based interest deriving from its location on the river and its resources. China's national interests in the Transboundary River were influenced by different political and social interests.

Major rivers that flow through South and Southeast Asia such as the Yangtze, Yellow, Brahmaputra, Mekong, Indus, Salween, Sutlej, etc. have their source

in Tibet. These rivers have sustained more than 1.3 billion people across 10 different countries: India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Nepal. China's annexation of Tibet in 1959 gave it possession of the headwater of Asia's major rivers. This is why China has been defined as an upstream superpower (Nickum 2008).

China's national interests in each transboundary river are different and are mainly determined by the benefit it derives from the river system whether they be water resources, energy, navigation or political interests, etc.

Despite being an upstream superpower, China faces enormous water shortages due to climate change impact and uneven distribution challenges in the country. The related effect of water shortages places an increasing demand on its major transboundary rivers and poses a direct threat to food security, energy security, and the environmental security of Asia as a whole. Hence it is important to understand China's national interests in the international rivers since it has implications beyond its national boundary.

With the changing geopolitical context and climate change, transboundary water issues in South and Southeast Asia are becoming an increasing concern. Therefore each nation formulates its transboundary water policies based on its national interests. The management and governance of Transboundary Rivers often involve an issue of national security, territoriality, and competition.

Asia, which is home to 4.5 billion people, is also the world's most water-stressed continent (Brandon 2012). According to research from the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) water program, water scarcity will increase in 74 to 86% of the region in Asia, with about 40% of the continent's population facing severe water scarcity by 2050 (Tunncliffe 2018). Therefore, in Asia, freshwater resources are increasingly gaining strategic importance.

Although China has signed some bilateral treaties related to the development and management of its shared transboundary water resources with some of its neighbors such as Russia, North Korea, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan, etc., there are fewer agreements in the southern region (Huiping Chen 2013). Although there are limits to the extent of Chinese cooperation in the southern region, China is more cooperative with Mekong region countries than with India (Ho, Selina 2014). According to Selina Ho, China manages its international river as a subset of its relation with its other riparian states. Therefore in the case of the Brahmaputra River, there is a possible linkage between its national interests in the river with other political relations between the countries.

This paper seeks to identify China's national interests and its policies in Transboundary Rivers. The paper has used the case study of the Brahmaputra River. To assess China's national interests in Transboundary Rivers, the uniqueness Brahmaputra River was examined. Understanding these national interests will offer a useful insight into its behavior and calculation behind why China has not signed any transboundary water treaty with India.

China's National Interests and its policies in Transboundary Rivers

Transboundary waters account for 60 percent of the world's freshwater flows. Transboundary waters include aquifers, lakes, and river basins shared by two or more countries. There are 153 countries with territory within at least one of the 286 transboundary rivers and lake basins and 592 transboundary aquifer systems (UN-Water 2021). In the era of increasing water scarcity, mismanagement of transboundary water resources have the potential to cause social unrest and spark a conflict between the riparian countries.

China is an upstream country, which shares around 42 major transboundary watercourses (including lakes) that are shared with its neighboring countries in the northeast, northwest, and southwest of the country (Shaofeng 2018). These countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Vietnam. However, China lacks a comprehensive policy for managing its transboundary rivers. They formulate the transboundary river policy in terms of its national interests (Ho 2014). The management of transboundary waters is often eclipsed by politics, which in turn is frequently complicated by power asymmetries in the basin (Warner 2006). Many important shared basins in Asia- Mekong, Salween, Indus, and Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna- overlap with regional tension. Competition over water access in these basins is likely to increase as increasing demand for freshwater, population growth, and climate change continue to constrain water supplies.

According to China's peaceful development 2011 white paper, China's core interests include "state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China's political system established by the constitution and overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development." Currently, China's management of international rivers and its disputes with riparian countries over the damming of Transboundary Rivers involves "state sovereignty", "national security", and "territorial integrity" in the aforementioned core interests.

China as an upstream state unilaterally built several dams on international rivers based on the principle of “Absolute territorial sovereignty” over the water within its border disregarding significant economic, ecological, and political consequences for the downstream countries (Bhattacharya 2018). China is one of the three countries (along with Turkey and Burundi) that voted against the 1997 United Nation Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Use of International Watercourses mainly based on national sovereignty. According to Chen Huiping, Xiamen University School of Law, three reasons behind China’s objection to the UN Watercourse Convention are first, it fails to consider the interests of upstream nations, secondly, the convention requires nations to consult and negotiate with other nations on planned measures, which may damage national sovereignty and finally, the mechanism for dispute settlement include giving a fact-finding commission access to the respective territory which may damage national sovereignty (Walker 2014).

Many social and political factors influence China’s national interests in the Transboundary River. China fears that as an upstream, the country has everything to lose and little to gain from the constraints of regulation by engaging in multilateralism. Multilateralism will also encourage its sovereign rights and freedom of action in managing its key natural resources. Its strategy is thus aimed at preserving its national sovereignty and maximizing its room for maneuvering concerning developing water resources for social and economic growth (Ho 2014).

Water Security

Water security is an important issue driving state stability and safety in many regions of the world. Water scarcity is a serious issue that challenges the rise of China as a superpower. Water is vital to the economy, agriculture, industry, energy, and people’s livelihoods. Hence, it is important. Decreasing water resources is of great concern to the Chinese government. Former Chinese premier Wen Jiabao was quoted in 1998 as saying, “the survival of the Chinese nation is threatened by the country’s shortages of water (Plafker 2005). According to the United Nation, China has 20% of the world’s population with only 7% of freshwater (Thomas BilalibUdimal 2017). The scarce available freshwater resources create a huge challenge for China.

However, the scarcity of freshwater resources is further worsened by uneven distribution. Because of its large and diverse geography, Water availability in China varies greatly from place to place. Overall southern China is much more water abundant than the northern part. South China has almost 80%

of freshwater whereas northern China, which holds two-thirds of Chinese agriculture and 45% of the population, has only 13.8% of China's naturally available water (McCormack 2001).

However, the problem of water scarcity and the uneven distribution of water resources are further exacerbated by pollution, inefficient use, and climate change. As early as 1999, prominent environmentalists Ma Jun in his seminal book entitled *China's Water Crisis*, Ma drew global attention to China's looming water crisis in a book that draws attention to water pollution and scarcity (Ma 2004). The scarcity of water in China is aggravated by extensive pollution from industrial, domestic, and agricultural sources. Government surveys have found that uncontrolled industrialization and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers have made 70 percent of China's water table unfit for human consumption (Carney 2018).

The shortages of water resources in China have reached a crisis level therefore to deal with this enormous pressure on water resources China has tried to promote water conservation and limit water use but these measures have a limited impact and it is not enough to satisfy the growing water demand for growing drinking water, irrigation, energy production, and other uses. Hence China looks into the possibility to draw water from international rivers through water diversion and others projects (Gao 2020).

Energy Interests

China has undergone a shift from a largely agrarian society to a manufacturing powerhouse that led to a dramatic increase in its energy need (Hirst 2015). China is the world's largest energy consumer, the largest producer, and consumer of coal, and the largest emitter of carbon dioxide (China Power 2016). From 1990 to 2018, China increased its coal consumption from 0.99 billion tons to 4.64 billion tons. Since 2011 China has been the largest consumer of coal which also makes China the largest carbon emitter in the world.

According to Carbon Atlas, 69.5 percent of China's CO₂ emissions came from coal in 2020 (China Power 2016). While China's dependence on coal for industrial power generation has significantly contributed to the country's air pollution. The government has been looking for alternative energy resources that have the potential to reduce pollution. In the direction of green development, China has been vigorously promoting the clean and efficient utilization of fossil energy, prioritizing the development of renewable energy, developing nuclear power in a safe and orderly manner, and raising the proportion of non-fossil

energy in the energy supply structure (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2020).

Energy generated through non-fossil fuel is the main focus of demand growth in the 14th FYP period (2021-2025) as the country aims for non-fossil to provide for about 20% of total energy consumption by 2030. Non-fossil fuel energy sources such as wind, nuclear, solar, and hydropower may make up half of China's total power generation capacity by the end of 2022 (Reuters 2022). China is also the biggest investor in renewable energy. In 2019, China invests \$ 83.4 billion, which is roughly 23% of global renewable energy investment (BloombergNEF 2020).

Under the 2016 Paris Agreement, China has committed to making non-fossil fuel energy 20 percent of its energy supplies by 2030 (O'Meara 2020). Hence China has started investing in tapping hydropower resources that have the potential to reduce the emission of greenhouse gas and become the main source of renewable energy production.

With the desire for economic and energy development; industrialization and marketization have led to the formation of public-private partnerships in the infrastructural development of water resources, involving the state and private corporations without consulting the local population. Since 2002, Beijing has given the right to five big power generation companies (China Huadian Group, China Huaneng Group, China Sanxia Group, China Guodian Group, and China Datang Group) to build hydropower stations along China's major rivers (Habich 2017). To harness the hydropower resources, these five power companies have started exploiting Tibet's major international rivers such as the Mekong, Brahmaputra, Indus, Salween, etc. Due to the recent rush towards Tibet and the fierce competition among hydropower companies, these companies tend to go to a region and build a dam without getting the required approval from relevant upper-level governments, however, local governments also do not interfere with the exploitation of hydropower resources because local governments were eager for development and to increase their local GDP and Tax revenue (Habich 2017). This situation leads to the unsustainable development of major international rivers. It has major environmental and social implications for all the downstream states.

With more than 25,000 large dams, China is the country with the most dams in the world and it keeps pressing ahead with new megaprojects, particularly along its transboundary rivers. The potential negative effects of China's projects on its neighbor are huge. In 2021, China's hydropower facilities generated some

1300 terawatts per hour of energy. This makes China, the leading country in terms of hydroelectricity generation, capacity, and several new developments (Jaganmohan 2022).

In the context of growing water scarcity and the growing energy demand, the river flowing out of the country are of great significance. Water, particularly transboundary water, can be seen as a security issue as a change in the resource, due to reallocation, disaster, or degradation, can cause political tension, and social unrest, and can contribute to armed conflict (Marwa 2010). Constructing infrastructure to increase water storage is an essential part of national security as it bolsters national independence and sovereignty. As such that this entails engineering river flows through major damming and diversion work.

A Case Study on the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra River

Tibet is of great significance for India in terms of water resources. The four major transboundary rivers of India: Indus, Sutlej, Karnali, and Brahmaputra, originate from Tibet. These rivers originate near the holy mountain Kailash in Western Tibet. Among these four transboundary rivers, the Brahmaputra is of great significance for India. The river is called Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, the Siang and Brahmaputra in India, and Jamuna in Bangladesh. However, the precious water resource of the Brahmaputra is emerging as a new irritant between India and China. It has its source in the Chemayungdung glaciers near the sacred Mount Kailash. The Brahmaputra has a total length of 2800 km and is the 22nd longest river in the world (J.N.Sarma 2005). Its total drainage area is 573394 sq. km and is shared between Tibet, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh as co-riparian countries.

India and China are the two most populous countries facing an acute shortage of water resources. However, severe water scarcity, inefficient water management, high population growth, water pollution, and climate change have further exacerbated the already precarious situation.

For India, the Brahmaputra River accounts for 29% of the total run-off of India's river and is key to the country's river linking project. moreover, the Brahmaputra delta is home to over 130 million people, both in India and Bangladesh, there are over six lakh people live on river islets and rely on the annual 'normal' flooding to bring moisture and fresh sediments to the floodplain soils. Furthermore, it is also the source of 44% of India's total hydropower potential (Moreno 2018). As of now only less than two percent of the capacity of Brahmaputra has been developed. This is a crucial issue in

terms of energy security for a developing economy like India.

On the other hand, for China, the Yarlung Tsangpo/ Brahmaputra is a vital river due to its critical role in the agricultural and energy sectors. Due to its perennial flow, China believes that the river has an immense potential to be diverted to its arid northern region, hence several influential actors among China's People's Liberation Army along with the most nationalist wings of the Communist Party of China advocate and support of utilization of the Brahmaputra River. Moreover, the river is also intrinsically linked to the Sino-Indian border disputes, hence the increased Chinese sensitivity to the river and the claimed rights over its water (Monga 2022).

In the race for resources and power, Relations between India and China, two regional powers, have historically been tense. The tension was minimal until the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 when the countries came to share the border. China's annexation of Tibet enabled China to control and regulate the flow of water into downstream countries.

China's position as an upstream country gives leverage over India. The transboundary water issues go beyond access to drinkable water. Issues such as water scarcity, demand for hydroelectric power, and border conflict are also involved in China's behavior in the management of its international rivers. In this way, a zero-sum game could appear when we talk about the river as a commodity, which means the gain of one part is seen as the loss of the other.

Energy and border Conflict

As mentioned above, China's national interests in the Brahmaputra River are harnessing hydropower and control over the disputed border through hydropower development and using it as a leverage against India.

The Yarlung Tsangpo/ Brahmaputra is one of the main international rivers identified for hydropower expansion in Tibet. Over the last two decades, China has sought to harness the Yarlung Tsangpo by building several hydropower stations along the mainstream and the tributary of the river. According to the China Society for hydropower engineering, two of the dams were completed on the Yarlung Tsangpo i.e. the Zangmu hydropower station and the Jiacha hydropower station (Global Beacon 2020). The Zangmu hydropower station is the largest existing hydropower project at Gyatsa County in the Lhoka (Shannan Prefecture) of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region. It is less than 200 km away from the Indian border.

China initially denied that they were constructing a dam on the river even after the Indian government has asked for clarification and Indian intelligence services released satellite images of the site (Ho 2014). It was several months into the project, that Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, officially acknowledged its existence (Center for Development and Peace Studies 2015). Indian analysts believe four more dams have been planned or are under construction in the middle reaches of the Brahmaputra. Indeed, 2010 satellite images show that at least four construction sites have been developed in the vicinity of Zangmu (Ho 2014). In 2020, China has completed the second-largest Jiacha hydropower station (60 MW) in the middle reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo.

Even the 14th Five-Year Plan has vigorously pushed forward the hydropower project in the country (Tom Baxter and Yao Zhethu 2019). As per the 14th FYP, China announced that it would seek to exploit the hydropower potential of the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River. Although the design of the project is yet to be released, Chinese state-owned media reported that the proposed dam would be 60 million kilowatts (60 GW) and it could provide 300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean, renewable, and zero-carbon electricity annually (Shan Jie and Lin Xiaoyi 2020). The dam will be built in Metok (Medog) county of Nyingtri prefecture in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region. However, many experts believe that it could be the riskiest mega dam ever built. The location of the planned dam is prone to massive landslides and some of the most powerful earthquakes ever recorded. In March 2021, just upstream from the great bend where the Chinese propose to build the mega dam, massive landslides occurred as a result of a seismic event. The landslides have temporarily blocked the flow of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Petley 2021). Moreover, the location of the planned dam is very close to the disputed border between India and China. This project could further escalate the already tense Sino-India relations.

China claims that hydropower development is crucial to easing the tension of electricity supply in central Tibet, environmental protection, as well as social and economic development in the region (Global Times 2021). Moreover, China argues that the projects are the Run-of-the-River project and it won't have an impact on the downstream countries.¹ However, any intervention in the natural flow of the river will have consequences that could damage the river ecosystems. It can drive species towards extinction and disrupt the normal course of life for mankind.

1. A project is ROR only if inflow equals outflow on a real times bases, if there is no storage or flow modification at all.

The other interest is border conflict, the Brahmaputra River is also linked to Sino-Indian border disputes. The two countries have contested claims over Eastern Himalayas. This disputed area is called south Tibet by China and Arunachal Pradesh state by India. It has an area of about 83,743 sq. km (Pradesh 2022). The lingering border disputes urges states to build an roads, tunnels, airports, highways and dam building near the border for both socio-economic development and defense purpose. State lay a de-factor claim over a disputed territory by virtue of infrastructure. Sino-Indian strategic contention on many fronts have resulted in an unfavorable diplomatic atmosphere that hinders closer bilateral cooperation on the Transboundary River.

The intertwining of territorial disputes with the competition for water resources significantly complicates the management of the Yarlung Tsangpo. China can also easily manipulate the river flow, which puts India at a strategic disadvantage position (Sigh and Tembey 2020). Many experts believe that China is using its geographical advantage to maximize its development interest while ignoring other countries' rights to water utilization.

The infrastructure development on the Transboundary River as a form of territorial demarcation and control along contested frontiers, China's planned dam at the great bend of the Yarlung Tsangpo in the region what China calls southern Tibet signaled its control over the territory.

China's weaponization of the Brahmaputra River was evident in 2017 when China refused to share hydrological data with India while sharing it with Bangladesh (Khadka 2017). The data denial has been linked to a military standoff between the two countries on the strategically important Doklam area, which seriously damages the bilateral relationship between India and China.

Although India and China have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in 2002, 2008, and 2013 in which China agreed to share the hydrological data (water level, discharge, and rainfall) from three hydrological stations (Nugashe, Yangcun, and Nuxia) located in Tibet, from May 15 to October 15 every year (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India 2013). These MoUs do not include any mechanism thus limiting the legal reach of the MoUs (Tanushree Baruah 2022). However, these agreements are non-binding and there is no legal mechanism to ensure their implementation.

This data is of great significance for India's flood early warning systems to prevent deaths as the monsoon-swollen Brahmaputra overran its banks, leaving a major trial of destruction, especially in India's Assam state (Chellaney, China

leverages Tibetan plateau water wealth 2020).

China's control over the river gives effectively gives China a chokehold on the Indian economy. Again in 2017, the Brahmaputra River has turned muddy and black, making it unfit for any use. This has severely affected agriculture production in the Siang valley, known as one of the rice bowls of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and it also has severely impacted the finishing communities (Sigh and Tembey 2020).

Geostrategic Brahma Chhlaney has also described how China could use its leverage to deter downstream countries from challenging its broader regional interests, citing that "smaller downstream countries in Southeast and Central Asia now use only coded language to express their concern over Chinese dam building. For example, calling for transparency has become a way of referring obliquely to China, which smaller states are wary of mentioning by name" (Chellaney, China's dam boom stokes concerns in Asia 2016).

Being an upper riparian country, it has a lot of power and China does not hesitate in wielding it. Journalist Steven Solomon has said that conflicts in the 21st Century will be fought over water, and China is already arming itself for the battle (Sharma 2020).

Conclusion

This paper has tried to find China's national interests in Transboundary River with special focus on the Brahmaputra River, a shared river between three countries. As an upstream superpower, China has both social and political interests in the international river and unilaterally build several dams on international rivers such as Mekong, Salween, Brahmaputra, and Indus, etc.

Scarcity of the freshwater water resources has caused the biggest threat to China's rise as a superpower. Hence Transboundary River is considered a strategic resources and it is explicitly linked to national security. China has rejected the notion of national integrity over shared water resources and instead follow a policy of absolute sovereignty.

With rising power demand and its commitment made to the UN General Assembly to peak its emissions before 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060 (McGrath 2020), China is focusing on generating hydropower by building a series of hydropower dams in Tibet. Hydropower is considered one of the important sources of renewable and non-fossil fuel energy to help China to meet its target. Both the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) (China's National

People's Congress 2011) and 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) (The People's Republic of China 2016-2020), China's State Council Energy Plan had approved an array of new dams on all of the major rivers of Tibet.

China's national interests and its policies on the Brahmaputra River increase the potential for conflict among the riparian states, especially with India.

Regardless of China interests, building hydropower dams on major rivers flowing from Tibet will have a huge impact on the millions of people living downstream. Hydropower dam, although claim as a clean energy, have many environmental impact. Hydropower dams will severely affect agriculture and fishing, disrupt flows of the river, increase in the salinity of the water, and silting in the downstream river will increase. However, China gives a low priority to managing its transboundary rivers. It is evident from the China's water law which was adopted in 1988, revised in 2002. There are only one article that deals with international river (Water law of the People's Republic of China 1998).

Water security is an indispensable part of national security and the strategic foundation of national economic development. China is using the leverage of being the upper riparian to maximize its interests in water security. China persists in exercising its sovereignty right to access and use natural resources. China aligns these rights with the United Nation's 1972 agreement on the environment, which emphasizes the state's sovereign rights to "exploit" its natural resources (Handl 2012).

The Tibetan plateau is seismically an active region, where the tectonic plates of India and Eurasia meet. Since earthquake records began in 1900, as many as 18 huge earthquakes above 8 on the Richter scale and more than 100 earthquakes of 7-7.9 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the plateau (Deng Qi-Dong 2014). There are almost two billion people dependent on rivers flowing from China, mainly from occupied Tibet.

China's infrastructure development on transboundary rivers is unilateral, allowing little space for dialogue and accommodation, and is bound to affect downstream riparian both in terms of water flow and ecological consideration.

As per the 14th FYP, there will be a dam built on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo, which will be near the Indian border. Dams, of course, are one thing, Indian pundits are concerned about the possibility of China diverting water from the Brahmaputra for the western route of its South-North

Water Diversion Project (SNWDP) (Bhat 2017). India has to be watchful.

China argues that the streams of Transboundary Rivers are a matter of its national sovereignty, even if it affects the downstream countries. China has chosen the policy of absolute sovereignty over shared water resources. However, Beijing is aware of the impact that its action on the Transboundary Rivers could have on its regional relations. Therefore China keeps on and off relations with riparian countries in terms of international rivers and signed a bilateral treaty while avoiding a multilateral treaty with downstream countries.

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The #freetibet Movement: An Analysis of the Digital Word of Mouth in Keeping the Movement Alive

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Abstract

A question posted on Quora; a public question-and-answer website, a digital platform to gain and share knowledge, reads: “What happened to the Free Tibet Movement?” It invoked a question about what happened to the free Tibet movement, once a very popular cultural phenomenon that it had people from all across the world and even celebrities supporting the cause. There are even answers and articles claiming that the movement has fizzled out or it is a lost cause. Some have even gone to the extent of saying that it is just a way for the Tibetan diaspora to gain popularity, while others have gone deeper to assert that even the Tibetan youth in the diaspora have lost interest in the movement and that only a handful people, especially some organisations like the free Tibet organisation and Tibetan Youth Congress, have kept the cause going. The study aims to find the answer to the question by analysing the answers provided for the question on the website and analysing the hashtag #freetibet on various social media platforms. The study shall examine the various aspects such as the reach, frequency, locations, interactions, language and also sentiment analysis to further enrich the knowledge regarding the present status of the free Tibet movement, especially on the internet and whether it can be called cyber-activism.

Keywords: Free Tibet Movement, Social Media, Cyberactivism, #freetibet

Introduction

In September 1949, Communist China invaded Eastern Tibet without warning and then eventually seized Chamdo, the location of the governor’s office. The Tibetan government denounced the Chinese invasion at the UN on November 11, 1950. The Steering Committee of the General Assembly decided to postpone the issue despite El Salvador’s request. Despite being just sixteen years old at the time, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama assumed full temporal and spiritual authority as Head of State on November 17, 1950 (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 13).

Under dubious seals and threats of further military action in Tibet, the so-called “17-point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” was forced onto a Tibetan delegation travelling to Peking to negotiate the invasion on May 23, 1951. Then, by violently suppressing the Tibetan people’s resistance and breaking every provision of this oppressive “treaty” that they had forced on the Tibetans, the Chinese utilised this agreement to carry out their ambitions to turn Tibet into a Chinese colony (ibid).

Tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers reached Lhasa on September 9, 1951. The violent occupation of Tibet was characterised by the systematic demolition of monasteries, religious persecution, denial of political freedom, mass arrests and imprisonment, and the killing of innocent men, women, and children. The Tibetan National Uprising against the Chinese in Lhasa on March 10, 1959, marked the culmination of the widespread Tibetan resistance. Thousands of men, women, and children were brutally and arbitrarily slaughtered by the Chinese in the streets, while many more were imprisoned and deported. Nuns and monks were the main targets. Temples and monasteries were bombarded (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 14).



Image 1. Champa Tenzin is being hailed by the crowd as shown on the cover of the anniversary report by Tibet watch. Photo source: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/30-years-of-resistance>

On March 17, 1959, the Dalai Lama left Lhasa to escape the pursuing Chinese and seek political asylum in India. An unprecedented exodus of Tibetans followed him. Never before have so many Tibetans been forced to depart their homeland under such terrible circumstances. There are presently over a million Tibetan refugees worldwide (ibid).

After 1959 Tibet had to face a lot many issues such as violation of human rights where arrests would arise from any manifestation of ideas at odds with Chinese Communist Party doctrine. The Chinese government has actively targeted religious institutions in an effort to eradicate Tibetan nationalism, support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and any disagreement. Tibetans are constantly imprisoned and arrested without cause. Tibetan political prisoners who are under the age of 18 do exist, and young monks and nuns are frequently banished from their revered institutions (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 50).

In search of freedom, a means of subsistence, and education in the exiled community, where the Indian government offers services that the Chinese government cannot even imagine much less supply, thousands of Tibetans continue to flee their native country. Constant international pressure is necessary to persuade China's administration to uphold the agreements on human rights (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 52).

Another source of worry is the Chinese government's population transfer, which has reduced Tibetans to the status of a minority in their own nation. Other difficulties include Tibetans' limited access to educational opportunities. The environment is a key source of concern for Tibetans since deforestation has resulted in soil erosion, floods, and animal extinction. Despite the 13th Dalai Lama's ban on hunting, the Chinese continue to participate in "trophy hunting" for endangered animals (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 53-54).

As a result of unrestricted mining for borax, chromium, copper, gold, and uranium, the risks of large landslides, soil erosion, and wildlife extinction have increased. A major cause of concern is the disposal of nuclear waste, as there have been reports of unusual Tibetan fatalities and livestock deaths close to China's nuclear sites. Additionally, there have been allegations of an increase in cancer cases, birth defects, and river contamination when Chinese inhabitants received official warnings but native Tibetans did not (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 55-56).

Although the majority of people consider the 1959 uprising to be the beginning of the free Tibet movement, some see it as the root of the movement rather

than its beginning. Every year afterwards, there were demonstrations and protests honouring the uprising. The five-point peace proposal for Tibet, which HH the Dalai Lama presented to the US Congress in Washington, DC, on September 21, 1987, is thought to have served as the movement's tipping point(India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 127).



Image 2. Monks of Ganden Monastery staging protest on 5th March, 1988.
Photo source: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/30-years-of-resistance>

The five-point peace plans suggested were as follows:

1. Transforming all of Tibet into a zone of peace.
2. China's population transfer scheme, which jeopardises the very survival of the Tibetans as distinct people, is to be abandoned.
3. Honouring the fundamental rights and liberties of the Tibetan people.
4. China's exploitation of Tibet for the manufacturing of nuclear weapons and the disposal of nuclear waste must end, and Tibet's natural environment must be restored and protected.
5. The start of sincere dialogue on Tibet's future status and the peoples of Tibet and China's ties.

This was not well taken by the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's peace proposal was rejected by China. On September 24, 15,000 Tibetans in Lhasa were coerced into attending a public assembly when 11 Tibetans were given penalties for alleged crimes. Two of them received death sentences and

were put to death. Then, on September 25, local Lhasa television broadcast footage of the Dalai Lama in the US along with stern criticism from the Chinese government. Following this, hand-printed posters supporting the Dalai Lama began to emerge all throughout the Barkhor (Tibet Watch 2017, 1).

There was a pro-independence demonstration led by 21 monks from the Drepung Monastery (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24). The young monks made the decision to take action to demonstrate their support after seeing how the Dalai Lama's visit to the US had been covered by Chinese official media. They went from Drepung Monastery to Lhasa quite early in the morning, congregating in a tea shop before setting out on a circle of the Barkhor at about 9 am, all in an effort to avoid being noticed. They brought a cotton piece with a hand-drawn image of the Tibetan flag on it. They sang "Tibet is independent" and "May the Dalai Lama live ten thousand years," among other things. Eventually, a group of around 100 laypeople joined them (Tibet Watch 2017, 3). On the first protest day, when 21 monks and 5 laypeople were detained, the gathering was dispersed without violence. Two Foreigners were detained in Lhasa the next day, September 28, for having Tibetan flags on their baggage (Tibet Watch 2017, 4).

Four days later however the proceedings took a violent turn when on the symbolic day of China's National Day, 1 October, a group of 23 monks from Lhasa's Sera Monastery protested. Additionally, they carried a Tibetan flag and marched around the Barkhor while shouting pro-Tibetan independence chants. These demonstrators also demanded the release of the Drepung monks who had demonstrated and been detained in September. The Jokhang Temple and Nechung Monastery joined the monks from Sera Monastery, who had originally organised this protest. Around 50 layman Tibetans later joined this group, and as they circled the Barkhor, the gathering increased (Tibet Watch 2017, 4).

When police arrived to disperse the demonstration after the fourth circle, the monks and around 30 lay people were taken into custody and transferred to the police station in the southwest corner of the Jokhang plaza. There were riotous scenes when 2,000–3,000 people gathered outside this police station to call for the release of individuals who had been detained. While the crowd toppled over police cars and set them on fire, women and children flung rocks at the officers. A group of youthful monks led by Champa Tenzin, a Jokhang monk in his forties, took advantage of the fire at the police station to rush inside the enclosure. After ten minutes, some of the monks who had been detained came out of the building's side, followed by Champa Tenzin, who had arms

that were severely burnt. Three of them were shot dead as they sprinted into the gathering, but the rest managed to flee. Champa Tenzin, who was hailed as a hero, was carried as the crowd gathered around the Barkhor as can be seen in image 1 (Tibet Watch 2017, 4). This time, there was clearly violence as at least 9 police officers were killed, and even international media and tourists were forced out (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24).

There were a series of such protests happening in and around Lhasa since the two upheavals until March 5th 1988 when on the last day of the Monlam festival there was a major demonstration that was started by the monks of Ganden Monastery (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24). As recalled by Ven. Bagdro (one of the participants of the demonstration) there were cries of “Tibet is an independent country”, “China out of Tibet”, “Tibet belongs to Tibetans” and “Return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet” (Tibet Watch 2017, 4) (image 2).

The precise number of deaths among Tibetans on March 5 is unknown. Around fifteen monks may have been killed within the Jokhang by troops, according to Tibetan witnesses. Four military vans were filled with monks from the Jokhang after the beatings; several of them were taken out unconscious, and some were thought to be dead. Some of the monks managed to flee by jumping off the building, injuring themselves. Some of the injured may have passed away in hiding after being too terrified to seek medical attention for fear of being apprehended. In the days that followed, there were rumours of Chinese teams disposing of dead. Twelve monks were shot and killed within the Palden Lhamo shrine inside the Jokhang, according to a wall poster that went around following the 5 March (Schwartz 1994, 82).

Two significant papers were proposed in the summer that followed. One involves HH the Dalai Lama presenting the members of the European Parliament with the historic Strasbourg Proposal for Tibet (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24). The Drepung Manifesto, also known as the “Precious Democratic Constitution of Tibet,” was an eleven-page booklet printed on wood blocks by a group of Drepung monks (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 103). These were followed by protests but not on a large scale.

The Panchen Lama died on January 28, and rumours of his murder quickly circulated throughout Lhasa. Throughout the winter, posters supporting the protesting monks and nuns and promoting additional demonstrations have appeared throughout Lhasa. In February 1989, nuns and monks organised a series of modest protests in Lhasa, including one on February 22 in front

of the Jokhang Temple in support of Tibet's independence. However, more serious unrest did not break out until the first few days of March 1989 (Tibet Watch 2017, 6).

On March 1, 2, and 4, there were initially only minor demonstrations in the Barkhor. These were not really addressed by the government. Six nuns, three monks, and a few Tibetan youths in the Barkhor were the initial protestors on March 5th. As they circled and sang for freedom and Tibetan independence, it swiftly picked up speed. A police officer tossed a bottle from the police station as the mob and bystanders drew closer to it. A rock was thrown in response by a Tibetan youngster and struck the wall. When armed troops and plainclothes police officers showed up in the vicinity, they started shooting, which escalated the situation but scattered the crowd. That day, at least 50 Tibetans are believed to have died, and many more were injured (Tibet Watch 2017, 7). The demonstration is reported to have had over 10,000 people and up to 200 people being killed (India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24).

The security forces responded to the protests over the following two days with an escalating level of brutality. More individuals perished as a result of the police firing on the demonstrators once more. A group of 2,000 soldiers from the People's Armed Police and People's Liberation Army came on the evening of March 7 to put an end to the demonstrations (Tibet Watch 2017, 7). Martial law was officially declared on March 7 in Lhasa. On March 9, it was reported that 1,000 Tibetans had been imprisoned and that all foreigners be it, journalists, tourists or diplomats, had been expelled from Tibet (Tibet Watch 2017, 8; India Tibet Coordination Office 2019, 24).

Following these incidents, Tibetans began to refer to their demonstrations as both a call for human rights and for independence (Roberts II and Roberts 2009,112). The events in Lhasa in the late 1980s sparked a wave of civil society support, as well as foreign media attention, and several new Tibet organisations, also known as Tibet Support Groups, were established. One of the earliest was Free Tibet, which was founded in 1987, a few weeks after the demonstrations, under the name Tibet Support Group UK. In 1996, it changed its name to Free Tibet (Tibet Watch 2017, 9). The movement for a free Tibet may be dated to this period from 1987 to 1989.

1989 was also the year when HH the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his steadfast resistance to the use of violence in his people's fight to reclaim their freedom (Tibet Watch 2017, 9). The Dalai Lama considered the Nobel Peace Prize as confirmation that he was correct to condemn the

Tiananmen Square bloodshed (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 189). This wasn't well received by the Chinese government who in turn imposed harsh rules and laws under the martial law already implied in Tibet. The movement started to gain attention from the west and reached the status of popular culture with Hollywood actors, musicians and celebrities supporting the cause (Coleman 2019). This persisted throughout the 1990s, with widespread international backing and numerous marches and petitions in favour of a free Tibet.

In 1994, Students for a Free Tibet was founded, which helped the free Tibet movement spread to colleges and institutions. After receiving training in political activity with a concentration on Gandhian peaceful protest, college students dispersed to high schools and other institutions to impart their knowledge of political protest tactics (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 194). The Milarepa Fund, whose expanded mission was widespread support for the Tibetan struggle, organized the Freedom Concerts, which were first held in 1996 and featured many well-known performers who supported the cause of the free Tibet movement (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 195). The movement had gained global attention and support however Beijing and the Tibetan government-in-exile stopped communicating directly after Tiananmen Square, but they occasionally still did so indirectly. China has frequently said that if the Dalai Lama meets certain requirements, talks might restart (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 201). During this period Tibet was open to tourists and martial law was also eased in Tibet.

The next momentous uprising in the free Tibet movement came when around 300 monks gathered at Drepung monastery on March 10, 2008, they intended to march toward the old Barkhor district of Lhasa, close to the Jokhang temple, where they would make their demands. To represent how the Tibetan spirit could not be broken, they picked the 49th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 214). The police responded with brutality and force, yet the monks staged a sit-in on the street because they wouldn't be intimidated. The 14th of March 2008 would go down in history. In a second march, the Drepung monks reiterated their original requests. The Chinese had already decided to quickly disperse any fresh protesters. This time around, there were enough trucks on hand to handle the mass arrests, the beatings were brutal, and Qingli was given the go-ahead to shoot Tibetans who disobeyed him (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 215). This infuriated the Tibetans, who staged protests throughout the globe and many of them resorted to self-immolation. The situation had gotten so bad that China attempted to censor all news and information coming out of Tibet and to embellish the

truth. There was so much opposition to the 2008 Olympics in China from many nations that they were forced to engage with the envoys of H.H. the Dalai Lama to discuss the situation in Tibet (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 225).

The 2008 Olympics highlighted China's faults rather than its strengths. The March demonstrations and the Olympic Games in Beijing made the world aware of China's shortcomings at a time when "Brand China" was still making its mark on the global stage. But the Dalai Lama also faced difficulties as a result of the March demonstrations. The prominence of Tibetan flags and calls for independence show that sentiments for the Dalai Lama's middle-way was questioned. It was challenging for the Dalai Lama to maintain control if sentiment for autonomy in Tibet soured and a new independence movement was growing (Roberts II and Roberts 2009, 227). At the Everest base camp, four activists from Students for a Free Tibet performed a theatrical action in which banners reading "One World, One Dream: Free Tibet 2008" in English and "Free Tibet" in Tibetan and Chinese were unfurled. The tagline from the Beijing Olympics, "One World, One Dream," was referenced on the banner (Becker 2013, 182). During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, SFT had the opportunity to draw attention to continued human rights violations associated with China's fifty-year occupation of Tibet and to refute China's assertions that its human rights record had improved. The campaign's potential was also constrained by China's hardline stance and strong national interests. The movement was also hindered by a lack of funding and an inability for Tibet to organise itself (Becker 2013, 192).

Nevertheless, a new strength for the movement arose during the 2008 campaigns, and that was the utilisation of new technologies. By utilising modern technology, exile Tibetans were able to bypass China's sophisticated "Great Firewall", a system of Internet control and monitoring, as well as advertise its acts in spectacular and unheard-of ways, such as by streaming footage from Mt. Everest via satellite. Tibetan organizations including SFT thought that its strategic advantage was to get information out of China and spread it widely in the face of Chinese measures to restrict demonstrations and information (Becker 2013, 194).

However, post-2010 the movement seems to be a little "less high profile" and lost momentum, although there are campaigns and protest being held and still pushing the free Tibet movement (Coleman 2019). China's influence and power have increased significantly and Tibet is still under its control is one of the biggest challenge to the movement. Many states use an appeasement

strategy; intimidated by China's bluster and propaganda, they accept China as the dominating power it so badly seeks to become and happily forgo their concerns about human rights in favour of economic agreements. Lhasa is under the most intense monitoring and supervision, and Tibet is still virtually cut off from the outside world both physically and technologically. All dissent is swiftly and ruthlessly put down. The movement has been harmed by China's expanding economic influence, intra-Chinese disputes, and over-reliance on the West (Gurung, 2017). Without an open and effective system of communication, a joint struggle with significant social contact is only a pipe dream. A movement is hindered if the general public lacks access to various ideas and points of view (Dalha 2015, 82).

What became of the Free Tibet Movement in today's environment of the internet and social media, where there is often an abundance of information? Interestingly, the solutions are available on the internet itself. This research analyses the replies from the Quora¹ platform (a social question-and-answer website that serves as a digital hub for information acquisition and sharing), looks at the present state of the #freetibet campaign and looks at those answers. The study shall also analyse the #freetibet across different platforms and analyse the engagement level and other aspects of it. Finally, sentiment analysis of tweets with #freetibet would be conducted to understand the current emotion regarding the free Tibet movement.

What Happened to the Free Tibet Movement?

This is a challenging but vital question for everyone who has and continues to fight for an independent Tibet. One of the main obstacles to the free Tibet movement is the growing power of China and the west's reliance on it, as was already indicated above. Numerous perspectives were illustrated by the Quora replies to the query. It appears that many nations doesn't wish to go up against China at the moment because of their dependence on them for product manufacture and the rising influence of China as a global economy.

According to some of the responses, the *"free Tibet Movement was started by the rich and influential Tibetans"*, implying that it wasn't initially a people's movement. The fact that Tibetans now have refugee status in nations like India and the US and are enjoying far better lives than they would in Tibet was also discussed. As a result, they don't bother as much. Therefore, the movement is not sustained other than by a few *"fringe groups"* that are seeking fame and attention. Others

1. <https://www.quora.com/What-happened-to-the-Free-Tibet-movement>

insinuate that China is putting all of its considerable power to use to halt this movement. Tibet's independence or separation will not be tolerated at any cost. The West just pays "*lip service*" to the Dalai Lama. However, as most people recognise that China has the upper hand, they dare not offend China over Tibet. Some have also asserted that modern activists aren't Tibetans at all, but rather egotistical "*whites*", who believe they are superior and have the right to meddle in other people's affairs.

Some claimed that because the Chinese government provides for the Tibetans in Tibet, they do not desire a free Tibet. Additionally, one of the responses implied that the need and desire for a free Tibet only originate from Tibetans in exile and that "*people always choose to believe what they want to believe*", suggesting that this movement for a free Tibet is solely led by exiled Tibetans who want others to believe that Tibetans who still live in Tibet support the movement as well. The response continues by stating that anyone descended from a former serf in Tibet who is asked if they desire a free Tibet will respond negatively. This also applies to Tibetans who have lived in other regions of China or Tibetans who only speak Mandarin. Only the Tibetans living in exile in India or the US are likely to respond positively. The reply acknowledges that some Tibetans seek independence, but also says that others should take into account the Tibetans who hold opposing or alternative views. Another response is that the Free Tibet Movement is essentially something the West invented to make itself feel good. It has little effect on Tibet but has a big effect on those who participate in it, giving them "*the warm and fuzzy feeling that they are the courageous and righteous people who stand up to tyranny by waving flags and shouting slogans in the nice sunny afternoons*".

The most intriguing reaction, though, was that the idea of a free Tibet only exists in older generations and that younger generations only know about Tibet from what they have heard from their elders. The majority of what youngsters hear is mostly based on what previous generations remember, and occasionally it may be knowledge that has been passed down through more than one generation. This has a lot to do with remembering and forgetting. Beyond the act of creating memory narratives, the problem of their transmission via diasporic (and non-diasporic) regions and generations are crucial (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 691).

In order to keep the movement alive the older generations need to transfer their memory to the younger generations but despite the fact that diaspora studies frequently implicitly centralise the intergenerational transmission of a common

and collective memory of the homeland as a requirement for the survival and strengthening of the diaspora, the variety of ways in which children and youth “inherit”, contest, negotiate, transmit, and mobilise specific memories have, nevertheless, only rarely been examined (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 692). But one often overlooks the fact that forgetting happens at the same time as remembering (Mautantonio, 2017, 12).

Why it is important to look at memory is because leaders frequently mobilise memory as a tool of politics by drawing on collective understandings of the past. They sometimes strategically utilise the past, using memory to justify their conduct with reference to formative events in the collective consciousness of their community. They sometimes use historical parallels to frame and think through critical issues (Verovšek 2016, 529). So, the idea of a free Tibet is based on the “collective memory” of the generation who came from Tibet and not the generation who have never been there. Therefore, it was implied in the responses that some of them were using it as propaganda and pursuing the younger generations in order to perpetuate the pursuit of an imagined independence. Diaspora memories are formed not just on the basis of what they are prepared to recall, but also on the basis of what the others are prepared to acknowledge (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 692).

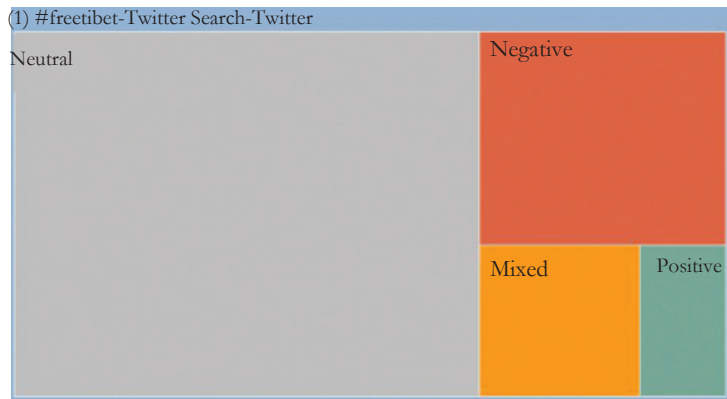


Figure 1. Hierarchy tree map of sentiment analysis of #freetibet on NVIVO

Although there is a need to make a distinction between memory due to exile and diasporic memory, exilic memory can be seen as a common representation of the painful circumstances that led to the group’s dispersal from their nation of origin and serves as the main frame of reference for the traditional understanding of diaspora. Instead of being framed by a narrative of the place of origin per se, diasporic memory is the consequence of a collective migration

trajectory, with the diaspora's sense of difference and of being a minority having thus shown itself over the course of their emigration (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 687). Tibetans, particularly the older generations, have always identified as being in exile and therefore referred to as “refugees”. However, this term is not used to refer to people who may have migrated voluntarily but are unable to return “home” in safety and dignity for a variety of reasons, such as those who may have been subjected to individual or collective persecution, cumulative discrimination, and/or human rights abuses. That is why many prefer to remember Tibet as “The Lost Homeland”.

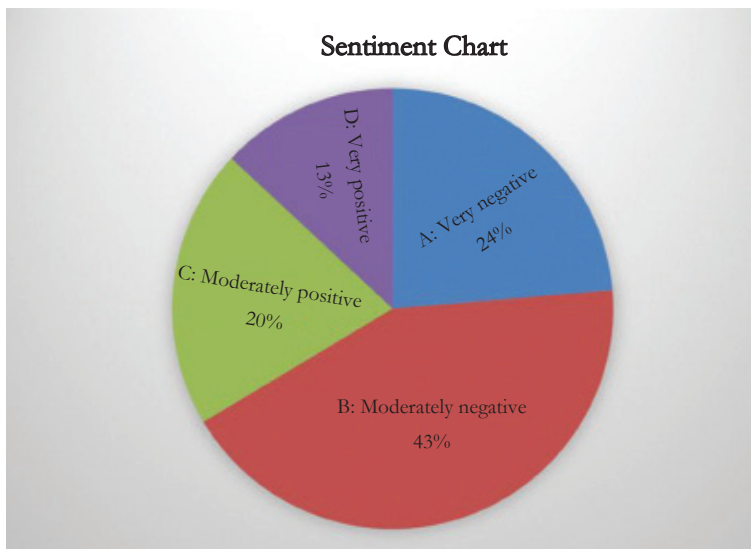


Figure 2. Sentiment distribution chart of #freetibet (after removing neutral and mixed sentiments)

Nevertheless, the responses proclaimed that the younger generation of Tibetans is much more at ease wherever they are and that rather than being a “home away from home”, it is genuinely “home” for them, and that it might not be the same if they are to return to Tibet if it were to become independent. It also needs to be seen if young Tibetans, who like most nowadays are heavily reliant on social media and the internet, have the patience and open-mindedness needed to listen to the stories told by the elder generations as projected by Gurung 2017, 7. So, these assertions from the replies to the question on Quora guided the study in a direction to examine whether the movement has actually fizzled out, is it a lost cause? (Gurung 2017).



Figure 3. Map of the location of the tweets with #freetibet

Analysis of #freetibet

“We don’t have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it.” -(Kumar, Qiu and Kumar 2022, 1)

The use of hashtags in the present day is very important as it allows any content to be discoverable, categorised and connected to others under particular specific and unique words preceded by the ‘#’ symbol. This also helps in increasing the visibility of one’s content to its targeted or associated audience (Omena and Rabello 2020). The study examines the hashtag #freetibet, which has become the most popular way to convey anything online even vaguely related to the movement, in order to ascertain whether the interaction and debate surrounding it are indeed extinct or still alive. However, as Dalha (2015) suggests, Chinese censorship since the 2008 uprising makes it almost impossible for the information to come out from within Tibet even if it is online. But despite strict monitoring by China’s censors, the emergence of online social media in China, particularly Sina Weibo and WeChat, has given residents a forum to voice their thoughts and challenge state restrictions on their right to free speech (Dalha 2015, 89). So much so that it had become a personal and political tool for Tibetans in exile but with the ban on these platforms, the Tibetans once more fell into a scary state of unawareness (Dalha 2020, 16).

Thus, all the data collected for the analysis of #freetibet couldn’t include these major platforms as sources. For that purpose, the study employed Brandmentions¹ to look at the reach, the interactions, the engagement, the mentions, sources and languages that used #freetibet for a week from 6th – 12th September 2022 (as it was a free trial version). The results showcased a

1. <https://brandmentions.com>

reach of 2.7 million, 35.5k interactions, 261 mentions, 857 shares and 34.4 k likes. The sources these data were gathered from were Instagram (47.51%), Twitter (39.46%), Web (6.51%), Pinterest (3.45%), YouTube (1.92%) and others (1.15%). The languages used for the interactions were English (45.58%), Japanese (37.7%), Spanish (8.95%), Chinese (3.11%) and others (6.61%). When such levels of participation were attained, and that too in the absence of any news that may have affected such engagement, this in no way conveys the sense that the movement is a lost cause.

The study further utilised NVIVO (analysis software) to analyse the #freetibet engagement on twitter (as NVIVO can only extract # from the platform with the help of Ngage extension). Once the data was extracted it was analysed for sentiments with the help of NVIVO. Figure 1 shows the distribution of sentiment across all the tweets that used #freetibet and it can be seen from the figure that the most prevalent sentiment was neutral followed by negative then mixed and finally positive. So, one can sense that there was more negative content in comparison to positive but on a cursory glance at the tweets the negativity was more of tweets criticising China for violating human rights of the Tibetans and the misinformation being spread by them against Tibetans, rather than negative comments about the movement. For example, the #freetibet was coupled with other hashtags such as #TibetIsNotAPartOfChina which is a negative sentiment.

Figure 2 clearly presents the distribution of negative and positive sentiments associated with #freetibet and the most expressed sentiment is moderately negative followed by very negative then moderately positive and very positive. However, a detailed evaluation of the tweets is required to identify the context and content that support the opinions. It was not possible to ascertain the age groupings of the users participating since it is necessary to determine how many members of the younger generations are active.

Figure 3 helps in establishing that the engagement on #freetibet came from across the world rather than from segregated areas. This in turn contributes to establishing that the free Tibet movement is still very much alive, at least in the digital realm.

Conclusion

The free Tibet movement is very much alive, at least on digital platforms, as the findings indicated. However, as time goes on, the movement has and shall encounter difficulties that must be resolved in order to avoid turning

into an impassable blockage. One of the main issues is the ageing base of support for the cause of the Tibetans; many members of the younger generation are either uninterested or perhaps unaware.

AIDA stands for Awareness/Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action, and it is a concept proposed by E. St. Elmo Lewis (Rawal 2013, 39). The concept indicates that there is a process that a person must follow before doing any action. First, a person must be aware, or if they are aware, they must direct their attention. Only then may this lead to an interest, which may then grow into a desire, and lastly, action. Making the public aware of the movement should be the first step if the intended result or course of action is to actively engage in and continue the free Tibet movement. Some may contend that the movement is well-known and that many people are aware of it. Such assumptions, however, would simply hinder dialogue. Therefore, the elder generation of Tibetans must ensure that the younger generations are informed of the movement in all of its facets, and even if they are, they must draw their attention to the issue.

They should be able to maintain their interest in the cause once they have it, which is already a very difficult challenge. It is difficult, but it must be done. If they are able to become interested in the movement, their accessibility to and familiarity with the digital workspace will encourage their curiosity and interest, which, if properly fostered, can develop into desire. Once they have the desire, action will naturally follow. As previously discussed, the rise of China as an economic superpower has caused support for the movement to decline, therefore one of the keys for the free Tibet movement moving ahead is to seek new partners, and new perspectives, and to just keep pushing because one day something will crack and change will occur. The use of internet and social media was once used very successfully in 2008 by the movement's activists, the same platform which evolved even more can again be a key tool to achieving the goal.

With the involvement of the young generation, the movement can utilise digital word of mouth through various platforms and means and generate awareness and interest for the movement among others through cyberactivism. Cyberactivism is the term used to describe the use of the Internet to promote forceful or deliberate acts to effect social or political change. It can be combined with Cyberprotest, which is the application of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) by social movement activists, which has raised the possibility of a significant threat to established forms of political

engagement (De Donk, Loader and Rucht 2004).

One recent example of how digital word of mouth can have an effect is by a support group Free Tibet- a voice from Assam. It is a support group that aims to enhance the Tibetan liberation struggle in Assam and other Northeastern regions by including ordinary people in it. The forum intends to create a people's movement in India to assist the Tibetan liberation movement in order to achieve Tibet's independence. The group has recently focused on raising awareness and fostering greater knowledge of Tibet's ecological value and the Free Tibet movement's role in protecting the rivers Siang and Brahmaputra from China's ecologically disastrous design.

As it incorporates the ecological/environmental side, which is a subject of much interest in the current situation, this may be seen as a very successful strategy to attract attention and build interest. Leverage the publicity to raise awareness of the free Tibet movement, then portray it in a fresh light that emphasises not just Tibet's independence from China but also how this may have a good impact on the ecology and ecosystem of the region and its surrounding areas. Thus, this may be a strategy for raising awareness, generating interest, and then working to cultivate desire that would finally motivate action. If it can be effectively implemented, it will provide the movement with the much-needed spark that might raise awareness of the problem and pressure China to stop violating Tibet's human rights, a former autonomous nation in the Himalayas.

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Sixty Years in Exile: Exploring the Intergenerational Differences among Tibetans in India

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Abstract

The intergenerational differences within the Tibetan refugee community appear to be widening with time, and the community, which has more than 60 years stayed away from their initial flight into exile, finds themselves in the middle of several identity-threatening challenges. The combined experiences of the three generations of Tibetans in India in exile in the last six decades has impacted the individual and collective identities of Tibetans, and has presented new set of challenges for the times ahead. The generation of the 1950s comprised youth in their 20s and early 30s at that time. The generation proximal to them grew up in the years following the upheaval, i.e., during the 1960s and 1970s; and the third generation was born in 1980s and 1990s, at times when the exiled community in India was comparatively well-established and stable. The responsibility of the community now rests on the shoulders of this youngest generation — Tibetan youth who are in their 20s and 30s.

With this history in the backdrop, the present research paper primarily looks into the perceptions and attitudes of Tibetans in India towards their distinct tradition, culture, language and religious practices, and explores the similarities and differences among them. The analysis presented in the paper is based on the original data collected by the author through a field survey conducted among 586 adult Tibetans in two of the biggest Tibetan settlements in India – Dharamsala in the state of Himachal Pradesh and Dehradun in the state of Uttarakhand.

The paper, thus, in an attempt to understand the varied impacts of living in exile for more than six decades, lays special emphasis on the intergenerational

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differences emerging within the Tibetan community. Through the findings of the survey, it furthers the discussion around the Tibetan diaspora and looks into the important socio-cultural changes that the community is facing today amid its struggle to keep their unique cultural practices and values alive.

Keywords: Tibet, Tibetan, Identity, Culture, Language, Refugee, Migration, Intergenerational difference

Introduction

It's been over six decades since the Tibetans fled to India. Today, India is home to third, or perhaps, even the fourth or fifth generations of Tibetans who were part of the first flight in 1959 onwards. The studies on refugee communities indicate that the preservation of their traditional values, culture, customary practices, as well as their native identity and language in the host country comprise the most important components of adaption of such groups. The very nature and cause of their exodus, and the fact that they were uprooted from their land makes it all the more important for these refugee communities to preserve their collective identity. This presents a constant challenge of mediating their scattered historical inheritance with the 'heterogeneous present' (Chambers 1994).

The Tibetan community face tremendous challenges in re-rooting their lives along with preserving their distinct culture and identity in a foreign land (Mishra 2014). The challenges are multifold – from personal challenges of finding work and opportunities and economic mobility in exile, to the collective challenges of maintaining social and cultural values. While on the one hand, it appears important to accustom oneself with the modernity in order to survive, on the other, there is a constant dilemma of balancing this 'new way of life' with the traditional one.

Life as a refugee is subject to constant dilemmas with the community often finding themselves surrounded by Shakespearean question of 'to be or not to be'. With more than sixty years of exile behind the community, the Tibetan settlements have grown bigger with time. During last six decades, the needs, as well as the desires and expectations of the community have expanded, matching with the inevitable pace of the world.

The Tibetan story is largely referred as that of successful re-rooting in an alien land, of cultural survival owing to their limited acculturation with the host society, and that of achieving socio-economic success in making the

community self-dependent. The Tibetan community is often seen as a refugee community which, despite having spent more than 60 years in exile, has largely been able to negotiate with the mainstream culture – both the culture of the host society and the globalized western culture, without being overwhelmed by either of them. The refugee community is still seen as the one having a unique and distinct identity, having avoided the process of ‘sanskritisation’ to a large extent, which has affected several minority groups in India (Anand 2000).

However, several studies from time to time have highlighted the socio-cultural changes that the community has undergone since the time of their arrival, especially the increasing intergenerational gap between them (Palakshappa 1978; Saklani 1984; Oberoi 2009; Vahali 2009; Mishra, 2014). Margaret Nowak (1984) in her work based on the study of first and second generation Tibetans in India tries to interpret the distancing of Tibetan refugees in India from their traditional identities. Distancing, according to her, is a fact of life for most of the Tibetans living their lives in exile as Tibetan refugees. They feel estranged from both of their identities, the past identity of secure citizens of their free state, and the present identity as refugees of a foreign host state.

1.1. The Intergenerational Gap among Tibetans

The inter-generational differences within the Tibetan refugee community appear to be widening with time, and the community, which stands more than 60 years away from their initial flight into exile, finds themselves in the middle of several identity-threatening challenges. The combined experiences of the three generations of Tibetans in India in exile in the last six decades has impacted the individual and collective identities of Tibetans, and has presented new set of challenges for the times ahead.

The first generation comprises of the older Tibetans who were born in free Tibet and fled to India due to Chinese invasion in 1950s. The second generation comprises of those who were born in India to the first generation and have never seen the Tibet they know from the stories they are told. The third generation of Tibetans are those born to the second generation (i.e. to the people who have never seen the Tibet they belong to) but have lived their lives under the guidance of those who belong to the first generation (i.e. the ones who are the storytellers.) At a time when there is a continuous threat to Tibetan identity and continuous fear of dilution of their culture among ‘majority’ cultures, how do these three generations identify themselves?

The generation of the 1950s comprised youth in their 20s and early 30s at that time. The generation proximal to them grew up in the years following the upheaval, i.e., during the 1960s and 1970s; and the third generation was born in 1980s and 1990s, at times when the exiled community in India was comparatively well-established and stable. The responsibility of the community now rests on the shoulders of this youngest generation — Tibetan youth who are in their 20s and 30s.

The first-generation Tibetans have grown old and are now in their 70s and 80s. They have very poignant memories of their home land, Tibet, and of the times when the Chinese invaded their lands. They still preserve and cherish the emotional bond they have with Tibet. This generation played an important role in supporting and strengthening the foundations of Tibetans during the first two decades of exile, and also constituted the first batch of Tibetan officials to be part of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. They helped in establishing various institutions under their government in exile and worked hand-in-hand under the guidance of their leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resettle and develop as a community in the foreign land. It was certainly challenging for them to establish themselves in a land where they had to confront and negotiate social, cultural and linguistic challenges, along with huge climatic challenges.

Unlike the first generation, the second generation has vague and faint memories of life before exile, as they were children when they were brought to India after Tibet's invasion by China. They were the first to be introduced and exposed to the world outside of Tibet. The education system established by the first-generation Tibetans helped them learn about the traditional Tibetan culture and also about the modern educational curriculum, which they were a part of in the foreign land. This generation filled the urgent need of educated workforce in the 1980s and 1990s, and became the backbone of Tibetan community in exile in India. The third generation of Tibetans in exile in India are in 20s and 30s. Educationally, they are far better off than the previous generation and have much more exposure to the outside world compared to them.

Notably, in a 1978 case study done on Tibetans living in Mundgod, Karnataka, the researcher observed three aspects of this divide — *one*, that the generational conflict among Tibetans is potential rather than serious at that stage; *two*, the conflict between the conformist and the non-conformists is growing among the peer group; and *third*, there are signs of identity change among the younger habitats (Palakshappa, 1978). Furthermore, the Tibetan community's struggles with notions of home, displacement, ethnic identity, and assimilation are also

highlighted in more recent ethnographic work by Keila Diehl (2002). Tension among the community is evident, when on one hand the Tibetan leadership eulogize the virtues of being prepared to return at a moment's notice, and on the other, the youth are showing the desire to adapt to the new demands with regard to educational and occupational mobility (Grunfeld, 1987).

Today, compared to the older generations, the younger generation of Tibetans are far better placed to think beyond the traditional idea and framework that has governed the community in exile. The younger generation is also far more likely to be trilingual, with knowledge of Tibetan, Hindi and English, as compared to the older generations which by and large are either unilingual or bilingual. The younger generation are more likely to have connections beyond their own community, and as we shall observe in the present paper, are thus seem more influenced with regard to their tastes, lifestyles and general outlook towards matters concerned to them. The gap between the generations has tremendously increased, generating anxieties in the minds of traditionally old members of the community.

Despite His Holiness the Dalai Lama-led-Tibetan-Government-in-Exile's attempts at preserving their unique culture, identity and language in exile, the shift in the ideas and perceptions of different generations of Tibetans needs to be recognized. In this context, and owing to limited research on this area, therefore, it is crucial to explore the changes the Tibetan community in exile is experiencing today. The subsequent sections take this discussion forward and intend to unravel the rising tension, ideological shifts and emerging concerns within the Tibetan community living in India by looking into different aspects of their lives in exile.

1.2. Methodology

The present paper, which is based on 586 face-to-face interviews conducted among Tibetans of 18 years and above in Dharamshala and Mcleodganj, Himachal Pradesh; and Dehradun, Uttarakhand, examines the Tibetan society in exile and explores the differences among Tibetans, especially across different generations. In order to make the sample representative, the researcher followed Random Sampling Technique while selecting the respondents. Using a structured interview schedule, the respondents were asked questions on several themes, such as, legal, social, economic, political and cultural, and each interview took 30-40 minutes. The analyses presented in the paper has been done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Other than the survey interviews, the researcher also makes use of 18 in-depth conversational interviews conducted among the Tibetans living at Samyeling Tibetan Settlement, Majnu-ka-Tila, Delhi, which were recorded with their consent; and 10 open-ended interviews conducted with the officials of various departments under the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamshala.

2. Three Generations of Tibetans: Practices, Preferences and Attitudes

The present section shares the preferences and perceptions of Tibetans in India, and explores the intergenerational shift among them. For the analysis present in the paper, the Tibetan respondents are divided into three groups based on their age – the Tibetan youth of 18 to 35 years of age; the middle-aged Tibetans of 36 to 55 years of age; and the older cohort of 56 years and above.

The section compares these three broader generations of Tibetans, and explores the difference among them with regard to – *one*, the religiosity levels; *two*, lifestyle and cultural preference; *three*, awareness about Tibetan history and culture; and *four*, knowledge and efficacy in Tibetan language.

2.1. Level of Religiosity among Tibetans

First and foremost, the evidence with us shows Tibetans in India to be quite religious. In the survey, Tibetans were asked how often they engage in religious activities like ‘praying’, ‘visiting a monastery temple’, ‘reading religious books’ and ‘practicing meditation’. Looking at the ‘religiosity index’ created on the basis of their frequency of engagement in these four activities, as highlighted in Table 1, one finds over three-fifths of Tibetans to be highly religious (combining the categories of ‘high’ and ‘very high’), while a little over one-sixths are found to be moderately religious. Overall, the survey finds only a little over one-fifths of Tibetans with low religiosity level.

However, desegregating the respondents age-wise shows a clear pattern, with the religiosity declining sharply as one moves from the older cohort to the younger cohort. Comparing young Tibetans, with middle-aged and old-aged, the study highlights a sharp contrast. While only one in every eight of young Tibetans (13%) are found to have a ‘very high’ religiosity level, the proportion increases to one in every five (20%) among middle-aged and to as high as one in every two (51%) among the oldest generation.

Table 1: Religiosity level among Tibetans declines with age

	Level of Religiosity (%)			
	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
<i>Overall</i>	22	17	41	21
<i>Young (18-35 years)</i>	28	20	38	13
<i>Middle-aged (36-55 years)</i>	20	13	47	20
<i>Old-aged (56 and above)</i>	2	14	33	51

Note: Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

Despite CTA's attempts to inculcate religiosity among Tibetans from young age in schools, the religiosity levels seem to be relatively low among youth, indicating at an increasing generational gap with this regard. Tibetan youth between 18 and 35 years of age are far less likely to be religious as compared to middle-aged and old-aged groups. More than a quarter of them, in fact, have shown low religiosity levels.

For other religious groups this might not be a significant issue, but for Tibetans, who have often been looked at through the lens of religion by the world, this might have a significant impact on their collective identity in exile.

2.2. Lifestyle and Cultural Preferences

Be it any society, cultural changes over the time are inevitable. It's been more than six decades since the Chinese invasion over Tibet. Before its invasion, Tibet was seen as a remote and isolated society that preserved its unique customs and cultural practices amid the ever-changing world. Post-invasion, the Tibetan population living in exile is largely scattered. Challenges for them in protecting their unique cultural practices and values are manifold. Those still living in Tibet are finding it extremely difficult for them to continue their practices, firstly, because of a harsh regime that keeps a strict control over expression of Tibetan culture and identity, and secondly, due to mass Chinese immigration. Those living in India, or elsewhere, appear to be finding it hard to preserve their unique practices and traditions for being in a foreign land amid several other cultures and societies.

The present sub-section looks into the lifestyle habits and cultural choices and

preferences of Tibetans living in India, and furthers the central argument of the paper with regard to the constantly rising gap between different generations.

For this purpose, this sub-section attempts to understand the shifts within different generations of Tibetans regarding their choices, preferences and attitudes towards some of the most basic things that form essential part of their native culture and practices – such as traditional Tibetan clothes, Tibetan food, , and Tibetan healthcare.

2.2.1. Tibetan Clothes

Dolma¹, 25, like many other young Tibetans, prefers Western over Tibetan or Indian dresses – “Sometimes I like to wear Indian dresses. In my college days, I wore lots of Indian *Kurtas*. While working, I have to wear a *chhupa* as it’s a rule here. Usually, I prefer western as it is most comfortable.”

Apart from wearing traditional Tibetan *chhupa* while working, lots of Tibetan women wear traditional Tibetan *chhupa* only during festivals and ceremonies. The older women, however, are usually in their *chhupas* even on ordinary days. Notably, while you might see many Tibetan women in their traditional clothes but the same is not the case with Tibetan men. “I have a problem with men not wearing Tibetan dresses that often... women are wearing, why can’t men wear?,” asks Tenzin², 23, who works in one of the departments of the Tibetan government.

Corroborating this, the survey evidence also shows women far likely to be wearing Tibetan dresses as compared to men (*See Table 2*). While a little less than one in every two Tibetan women (45%) claim to be frequently wearing Tibetan dresses, among men, this proportion steeply falls to less than one in every three (30%).

Furthermore, looking at the intergenerational differences with this regard, the evidence with us shows preference for Tibetan dresses to be declining when one moves from older to younger cohort. Among old-aged, almost three in every five claim to be wearing them frequently, whereas, this proportion dips to two in five among middle-aged and about one in three among youngsters (*See Table 2*).

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Table 2: Tibetan women, as well as old-aged Tibetans, more likely to wear traditional Tibetan clothes

	How often do you wear traditional Tibetan clothes? (%)		
	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely/Never
<i>Overall</i>	38	42	20
<i>Men</i>	30	44	25
<i>Women</i>	45	41	14
<i>Young (18-35 years)</i>	31	48	20
<i>Middle-aged (36-55 years)</i>	41	38	21
<i>Old-aged (56 and above)</i>	57	31	12

Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

2.2.2. Tibetan Food

Many Tibetans, especially among younger generation, seem to be losing their Tibetan taste buds to the local Indian or western cuisines. For instance, Tashi¹, 30, finds Indian food to be more delicious than Tibetan, “When I was in Tibet I used to eat lots of *Tsampa* as my mom used to give it to me every morning. Here in India, it tastes different. It doesn’t taste the same, so I am not very fond of it anymore. I prefer Indian dishes now.” Similarly, Tsering², 39, who was born and brought up in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, is very fond of the south Indian cuisines and prefers south Indian food over any other Indian cuisine. Interestingly, Tsering’s family cook Indian food very often and rarely makes something Tibetan.

A young Tibetan entrepreneur Sonam³, 35, who owns a small café in Majnu-ka-Tila, Delhi, doesn’t have anything Tibetan in his menu. He says, “Why should I keep Tibetan food when I myself am very fond of Pizza, Pasta and Coffee?”

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Dolma¹, 25, however, while expressing her love for Tibetan food, says, “Momos, Chowmein are much generalized ideas of Tibetan food as the origin of them is China. If you look at the history of Tibetan food, much of it is indeed derived from the Chinese food. I do look for the Tibetan identity or Tibetanness in food... to me aesthetic beauty of Tibetan food is *Tsampa* or Butter Tea... their origin is Tibet. I can’t call Momo and Chowmein as Tibetan food.” Though, she does enjoy *Tsampa* and butter tea every morning, but she doesn’t have any favourite food. She quotes His Holiness the Dalai Lama: “When I am hungry, whatever I get to eat is my favourite food.”

Turning towards the survey data, when one looks at the preference for Tibetan cuisines among Tibetans, one finds one-fourths (25%) of the community to be ‘always’ preferring Tibetan food, while over half (54%) claim to eat Tibetan food ‘many times’ (See Table 3).

Table 3: Tibetan youth less likely to ‘always’ prefer Tibetan cuisines

	How often do you eat Tibetan food/ cuisine? (%)			
	Always*	Many times	Sometimes	Rarely / Never
Overall	25	54	19	2
Young (18-35 years)	14	59	25	2
Middle-aged (36-55 years)	36	47	14	3
Old-aged (56 and above)	42	51	7	0

Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100. * ‘Always’ was a silent category which wasn’t read out to the respondents.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

However, when one looks at the Tibetan respondents through the prism of age, the middle aged and old-aged are far more likely to be ‘always’ going for it, compared to the Tibetan youth. While only 14 percent of young Tibetans claim to be ‘always’ eating Tibetan food, among middle-aged and old-aged, this proportion is way higher at 36 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

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2.2.3. Tibetan Healthcare

Looking at the preferences for Tibetan health care, it seems to have far more takers among the old-aged as compared to the younger generations. Tibetan medicines, which are commonly available in a ‘*Men-Tsee-Khang*’ (a Tibetan health centre), is an alternate form of medication which are plant-based or herbal in nature.¹

Sonam la², an 80-year-old woman, credits the Tibetan medicine for her long and healthy life. She says, “Tibetan medicine is more like a process. You can’t simply swallow these medicines. They are given with lot of instructions. Some of the medicines have to be kept under the moonlight throughout the night and consumed right before the sunrise. Before prescribing you any medicine, Tibetan doctors work on your food habits and routine for a month or two. So it’s more like a discipline, which the young generation lacks.”

The popularity of the Tibetan form of medication, however, witnesses a sharp decline as one moves from older to younger cohort. While about two in every three (64%) of old-aged prefer it more frequently, among middle-aged it decreases to a little over two in five (44%) and further down to only one in every three (32%) among youth (*See Table 4*).

Table 4: Tibetan medicine’s popularity lower among youth

	How often do you take Tibetan medicines? (%)		
	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely/Never
<i>Overall</i>	41	33	21
<i>Young (18-35 years)</i>	32	36	27
<i>Middle-aged (36-55 years)</i>	44	35	17
<i>Old-aged (56 and above)</i>	64	18	12

Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

Young Tibetans, therefore are less likely to prefer Tibetan medicines as compared

1. Tibetan Medicine History. Retrieved from: <https://www.men-tsee-khang.org/tibmed/tibhistory.htm>. Accessed on October 19, 2022.

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to old-aged, as it requires immense patience and discipline. Tenzin¹, 23, however, prefers Tibetan medicines and often visits *men-tse-khang*. She says, “Allopathic medicine tries to cure the disease instantly but Tibetan medicine goes for the crux of the disease, they go for the origin of the disease. It takes time to heal but once it is healed, it is healed completely. It heals you from inside.”

Thus, as it is evident, the influence of the host culture, as well as the western culture, seem to be creating some significant cultural shift across the Tibetan community living in exile.

2.3. Tibetan History, Culture and Language: Perceptions and Knowledge

The differences among Tibetans come out even more strongly when one gauges at their perception of each other with regard to their level of awareness about their own history and culture.

In the survey, the Tibetans were asked about how much are different generations – young, middle-aged and old-aged Tibetans are aware about the Tibetan history and culture. As highlighted in Table 5, overall, two-fifths of Tibetans (40%) believe that younger chunk hardly have any awareness about their own history and culture. On the other hand, for middle-aged and old-aged groups, a negligible proportion (6% and 4% respectively) believe so. Only one in every 10 have a very positive perception of youngsters, believing them to have ‘a lot’ of awareness about the same, while half of them (49%) consider the young generation only to be ‘somewhat’ aware.

Table 5: Two-fifth of Tibetans feel that the younger generation lack awareness about their rich history and culture

	Awareness about Tibetan history and culture (%)			
	A lot	Some-what	Not much	Not at all
How much are the young Tibetans aware about the Tibetan history and culture?	10	49	39	1
How much are the middle-aged Tibetans aware about the Tibetan history and culture?	26	68	6	0
How much are the old-aged Tibetans aware about the Tibetan history and culture?	77	19	3	1

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Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

Thus, the growing intergenerational differences among the community are evident by the fact that two in five of Tibetans have placed the ‘young Tibetans’ at a low pedestal when it comes to awareness among them about the Tibetan history and culture.

Moving on, it is common to observe loss of language among immigrant communities since they acquire language skills of the host culture. For instance, Indian children in the US and UK lose their Indian mother-tongue unless parents make an effort to ensure they acquire these skills. All migrant groups try and ensure their children learn their native language. Tibetan refugees also tried to ensure a favourable environment for learning Tibetan language through the Tibetan schools established by the government-in-exile.

Language has played a major role of custodian of Tibetan cultural heritage in the lives of Tibetans in exile. Perhaps this is one of the most crucial issues that the current generation of the Tibetan community is facing in the light of the unintentional neglect of the language by the Tibetan community in exile. At this backdrop, the present subsection also looks at the proficiency of Tibetans in Tibetan language. Furthermore, it also highlights their perceptions of each other regarding their efficiency in their native language.

Looking at the evidence from the survey, even though almost every Tibetan in the survey feel it to be very important for their community to know their native Tibetan language, they again believe the youth to be least aware about the same. Table 6 shows that as high as one-third (33%) of Tibetans feel that the younger cohort lack the basic skills in the Tibetan language, indicating at another important concern for the community that has often been regarded to have successfully preserved their ‘culture and language’ in a foreign land. Proportion of Tibetans sharing such unfavourable opinion about the middle aged and old-aged is far lower than this – only six percent and eight percent, respectively.

Furthermore, while close to three quarters of respondents (72%) find the older generation to be ‘very efficient’ in their mother tongue, only one in five (21%) share this opinion about the youth.

Table 6: One-third of Tibetans feel that the younger generation are not much efficient in their native language

	Efficiency in Tibetan language (%)			
	Very	Some- what	Not much	Not at all
<i>How efficient are the young Tibetans in their native Tibetan language?</i>	21	46	32	1
<i>How efficient are the middle-aged Tibetans in their native Tibetan language?</i>	36	58	6	0
<i>How efficient are the old-aged Tibetans in their native Tibetan language?</i>	72	20	8	0

Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

Finally, the respondents were asked to rate themselves in the four major skills of Tibetan language – speaking, reading, writing and understanding. On the basis of how Tibetans rate themselves in each of these four skills, a language proficiency index is created. Accordingly, the respondents are divided into four categories, namely, ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘moderate’ and ‘not at all’, depending on their overall proficiency in a particular language.

The evidence presented in Table 7 shows those in the middle-age group to be more proficient in all spheres of their language, compared to the old-aged and younger cohort. While half of youth (50%) and nearly half of old-aged are found to be ‘very good’ (47%) in Tibetan, among middle-aged, this proportion is over three-fifth (62%).

Table 7: Middle-aged Tibetans more likely to rate them higher in their proficiency in Tibetan language

	Proficiency in Tibetan language (%)			
	Very good	Good	Moderate	Not at all
<i>Overall</i>	53	33	13	0
<i>Young Tibetans</i>	50	35	15	0
<i>Middle-aged</i>	62	30	8	0
<i>Old-aged</i>	47	36	16	0

Note: Rest of the respondents did not answer. Figures are rounded off and may not add up to 100.

Source: Survey conducted by the author.

A possible explanation for this could be a considerable improvement among Tibetans' level of formal education when they established their schools and other institutions in India after setting up their government in exile in 1960s. However, with the present youth found to be relatively less proficient than their previous generation (i.e. middle-aged), a gap seems to have started to emerge.

Dechen¹, 26, sometimes regrets to not have continued reading and writing in Tibetan after her school, "It's been 6-7 years and I have lost touch. I can still read but sometimes I find it really difficult, especially when there are these difficult texts. With all these years of higher education, an unexplainable gap has developed between me and the Tibetan language. Unintentionally, I lost touch with my language and often struggle with its grammar rules. It's kind of hard now. Sometimes when I sit and start writing in Tibetan, it comes out naturally. But I should do that more often." She feels that Tibetan-language issue is coming back on the surface and people are realizing they can't do without it, as all the Buddhist texts are majorly in Tibetan language. She further explains how merely six years gap has distanced her from her language, "I am blaming myself for not being able to stay in touch with it. I had been learning it for twelve years, and now merely six years gap is giving me a hard time with it. After college I went for one month program of Tibetan Intensive Language course in Sarah."

Concluding Remarks

The young generation of Tibetans in India, thus, appears to be at a fair distance from the previous generations, not only with regard to their general lifestyle and cultural preferences, but also with regard to their proximity with their native language. Simply put, the gains that were made in the decades following the Tibetans' exodus to India seem to be gradually fading.

It won't be an exaggeration to say that being away from their homeland have had considerable impact on their basic lifestyle and cultural choices. The constantly widening gap between different generations of Tibetans is certainly concerning, and with increasing number of Tibetans who are 'born in India', the community seems gradually drifting away from their age-old traditional and cultural practices. While some of these changes are inevitable, and are

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universal in nature, the others could be worrying given the exile status of the community.

Even though, the Tibetans must be applauded for being able to survive in a foreign land for over six decades, and for being able to continue living in harmony with each other and with the hosts, preserving their major values to a large extent, but at the same time, the cultural and lifestyle shifts over the years should not be ignored. For a society like Tibetan, which is surviving in an alien land under an 'ad-hoc legal mechanism', failure to study these changes from time to time may prove threatening to their own existence.

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Did We Care Enough For Our Sisters in Dhamma? Exploring Possibilities, Opportunities, Realities of Full Ordination (dge slong ma) of Buddhist Nuns Practicing under Tibetan Lineages across Indian Himalayas

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Abstract

Across several Asian countries and Buddhist traditions, the continuance and flourishing of the fully ordained Bhikṣuṇī sāṅgha has remained an opportunity in a veil, certain restrictions and issues of deep concern have always made the possibilities more distant than perceived. Recently a historical step that should be well applauded is witnessed, the full ordination of one forty-four female monastic to fully ordained Bhikṣuṇīs in Bhutan by HH the Je Khenpo with the support of Bhutan Nuns Foundation. Such a historical step gives us a way forward and a thought process to adopt similar steps across Indian Himalayan states (Though it is subject to legal codes of Mūlasarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka vinayas) as the Tibetan leaders HH The 14th Dalai Lama and HH The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa has always been in favor of the full ordination of nuns in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivādan tradition. Going by the legalities the ordination in Bhutan happened through a single ordination method by the order of the highest monks, which is the most possible accessible solution in case of absence of a fully ordained *sāṅgha* of nuns in Tibetan traditions. However given the success now we, must explore and look at the feasibility of dual ordination (by the order of fully ordained monks and nuns

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1. Thankful to my University Authority and my Department (Dean, my supervisors, and other faculty mentors) School Of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religions, Nālandā University. Grateful to Prof. Ute Huesken, Universität Heidelberg and Prof Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, University Of San Diego for inspiring and illuminating my critical thinking with important realistic insights, and allowing me to express my concerns on the issue of full ordination being an early career researcher have always been motivated to see their dedication for the cause of full ordination. Needless to say the paper is my sole responsibility and all the views and opinions are my own. Wish Metta and empowerment to all my dhamma sisters in Mulasarvastivadan Tibetan traditions. This paper is an extended version of the presentation made on Possibilities of Full Ordination of Tibetan Nuns at the Young Indian Research Scholars Conference Organized by the Tibet Policy Institute of the Central Tibetan Administration held from 17th to 19th October 2022 at Dharamashala, Sarah College, Himachal Pradesh, India.

together) or the possibility of ordination of the nuns by a **Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha** on a sole basis (maybe by a combination of Dharmaguptaka and Theravadin fully ordained nuns) to create India as a women-friendly spiritual geographical space. Though the start of the dge slong ma ordination is a welcoming step if we do talk about policies for gender equity and women's inclusive participation in spiritual and cultural administrative, ritualistic spaces we need to have the right policies taking a deeper real-time look at the issues and silent latent challenges faced by our sisters in dhamma. In this paper, I intend to study and suggest gender theories (in form of an organic¹ organizational leadership model, based on humanitarian principles) to create more empowering opportunities' for Tibetan Nuns, as social leaders to be followed and cherished by society at a large. The need of the hour is to focus on the contemporary **Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha** (Tsunmas) as a heritage of both India and Tibet as it can be projected as the living lineage of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (skye dgu'i bdag mo chen mo gau ta mI) and the five hundred Śākyan women who are probably the first female spiritual leaders of our country in an organized framework going homeless in search of an independent spiritual career. More specifically if we take a deeper look into the Tibetan nuns in exile, it's a wonderful saga of the creation of a more united space in terms of a different traditions of female Buddhist mendicants in alignment in the mainland of Buddhism in India blending on to the space of the early **Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha** where the order of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī becomes the inspiration of the spiritual path. The paper aims finally to look at the present identity narratives of the Tibetan Nuns and the possibilities of empowerment in terms of social, cultural, and change agents in our society.

Keywords: Gender, Buddhism, Full Ordination, Tibetan Nuns, Leadership

Introduction and Forming the Context

The possibilities, willingness, and opportunities of **Bhikkhunī/Bhikṣuṇī** (dge slong ma)² full ordination (bsnyen par rdzogs pa) in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivādan (gzhi thams cad yod pa smra ba'i sde) tradition is an ideal

1. By the word organic I mean a natural humanitarian calling on a sense of justice over the rigidity of the vinaya codes. Ultimately striking a deal based on middle path philosophies with a call based on vinayas as well as keeping in mind the need of the hour to support the **Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha**. In absence of the full ordination the novice nuns practice the dge tsul ma thirty six vows instead of the three sixty vows of a dge slong ma. For details see Nicola Schneider, "The Ordination Of Dge Slong Ma: A Challenge To Ritual Prescriptions," Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World, 2012. 110-111. Accessed at <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03210269/document> on 1/11/2022 at 11:00 A.M

2. Throughout the article I have used the terms of **Bhikkhunī/Bhikṣuṇī** (dge slong ma) interchangeably based on the vinaya tradition taken into consideration for discussion.

parameter to recognize the identity, spiritual and social aspirations of a female mendicant treading the path of dhamma/chos with the cultivation of the compassionate Buddha nature and in the way towards the path of enlightenment. In India, most of the female Buddhist mendicants in the northern and eastern Himalayan states, as well as in southern belts practice under Tibetan lineages. The concern extends to the question that how we recognize the contribution of our dhamma sisters in Tibetan tradition towards our Indian and Tibetan value systems and our social and spiritual ethos. The full ordination is needed so that the sisters have full access to all study resources but also to all advanced ritualistic spaces creating a gender inclusive academic as well as ritualistic space. But in this respect, the aspect that is required to be highlighted is the identity of a contemporary nun practicing Tibetan tradition. Why there is the need for full ordination and is it not dependence on an external validation that creates a vicious cycle of long-awaited societal as well vinaya abiding recognition? Why not nuns are encouraged to pursue individual quest of awakening just as the eminent yoginīs and siddhas in the Tibetan history? Because one may argue that awakening and wisdom have nothing to do with nomenclatures and titles but at a subtle societal level the lack of full ordination creates a barrier in right to advanced education and recognition as global spiritual women leaders. Moreover, the lack of full ordination has certain latent impacts. The respect and academic dependence of the tsunmas towards their respective lineage holders should be well appreciated, and also for the right continuance of the lineage as unbroken or undisturbed but there is a dire need for self-confidence to analyze texts and form own opinions on the dhamma teachings and not to look at the teachings through the lens of a particular teacher (lineage holders) as they might be their perceptions and perceptions differs from practitioner to practitioner. By this I do not mean to say the gurus and teachers are not necessary they are the biggest inspiration to a student but having an independent opinion and way of looking at the deep philosophy is needed for both social and spiritual growth. The dhamma teachers and Masters should be followed and listened to as an advisory and well-regulated guidance but the interpretation of the texts comes from individual explorations (Price-Wallace, 2022). What recognition do female mendicants need who crave the alms of the wisdom of the selfless beings, adherence to no-self also does not requires external validation of realizations and value additions in the moral self radiated to the world by the daughters of the Buddha. The question that is most pertinent in the contemporary scenario across three practicing living ordination traditions is in many the attempt of the full ordination has remained a welcomed topic but the execution and implementation have been not fulfilled due to a plethora of reasons and several difficulties related to substantial differences in vinaya

codes and differences in legal code interpretations across several orders? In this regard German scholar, Carola Roloff has rightly pointed out that the attempt to approach this issue of full ordination has more relied upon the commentaries of Tibetan scholars (Tanjur) along with Adbhidharma of Vasubandhu (non-vinaya sources) who are in relied on the commentaries of Indian scholars such as **Guṇaprabha** (Roloff 2020, 1-9). The question thereby requires more contemplation at a more humanistic ground in such a blocked situation. The Tibetan nuns carry their practice with minor ordination dge tshul ma/**śramaṇerī** at twelve years of age and then at eighteen years of age receive the dge slob ma/**śikṣamānā** ordination following forty-eight precepts after a two year probation period) to become eligible for the full dge slong ma ordination. The question that arises at this step is at twenty years' age even if they are mentally advanced to receive the full ordination, but they remain deprived of the advanced three sixty-four precept practice of the fully ordained nuns (Schneider 2012, 110-111). How would Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī have made her way keeping in mind the spiritual need and willingness of the nuns rather than entirely relying on the constraints posed by the vinaya rules as well as the nature of monastic authoritative perceptions? The conversation and the dialogue started with the extensive support of the Tibetan authorities and specifically HH the 14th Dalai Lama¹ at Hamburg in July 2007, which was also further, advocated by HH the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa.² The demand for full ordination was mostly advocated by the Western nuns when from the 1970s a trend occurred to receive full ordination in Chinese Dharmaguptaka tradition. But what about the advocacy when the conference on the possibilities of full ordination cannot be a mere product of the humanitarian voice of the monastic leaders, but rather a quest to resort to a legally acceptable highly ritualistic vinaya authorized dual **saṅgha (ubhayasamgha)** framework that can be accepted by all in form of mutually binding terms?. The quest in this

1. He also supported the full ordination publicly from 1983. Further strong advocacy for the cause was also advocated in 1987 at Bodh Gaya by Western nuns at the First Sakyadhita Conference. See <https://www.sakyadhita.org/conferences> for the information on the same accessed on 1/11/2022 at 5 p.m.
2. For details see “Dalai Lama urges Introduction of Bhikshuni Vows into Tibetan Tradition” Accessed at https://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2007/10/dalai_lama_urges_introduction_of_bhikshuni_vows.pdf on 10th October 2022 at 11:00 A.M. Also see <https://kagyuooffice.org/history-in-the-making-the-first-step-toward-full-ordination-for-tibetan-buddhist-nuns/> and <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/buddhism/ordination-in-the-tibetan-buddhist-tradition> Accessed on 10October 2022 at 3:00 P.M. Both are statement of support for Full ordination of Tibetan Nuns as Dge Slong Ma advocated by HH The 14th Dalai Lama and HH The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa who has been very vocal and supportive also about Buddhist Nuns in Drukpa Kagyu lineages who are also prominent Togdenma yoginis.

case must be more aligned with the nature of agency and freedom of the Buddhist nuns and the implications and benefits of a fully women driven full ordination in stark contrast to a full ordination as a result of complete dependence on **Bhikṣu saṅgha**. This comparative analysis is the need of the hour that how the agency of the nuns shifts if the full ordination can be thought of from a single ordination perspective from the senior Bhikkhunīs/**Bhikṣuṇīs** alone in contrast with the existent ordination by the group of elder monks on a sole basis. It's a very confusing situation when the upasampadā of the first ordination was done by the elder monks to Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī and five hundred Śākya women on unconditional acceptance of the eight heavy rules (gurudhammas) (Tsedroen and Analayo 2013, 744-774), again subject to a debate that probably the only ordination that happened by way of acceptance of the eight gurudhammas was that of Gotamī herself and later five hundred by the elderly monks (Davids and Oldenberg 1885, 325-329). Several lineages, schools of thoughts with respective legal codes that are mutually exclusive leads to a question of not only validity of the dual ordination but rather much more puts up a question on the dispute of adherence to the differences in rules. But standing in a contemporary social framework how do we address the disputes or rather why should be call differences as disputes that requires rectification rather than why not a inter agreement dialogue for the betterment of the **Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha**. In this regard I agree with the proposition of Darcie M. Price-Wallace who in her article has rightly pointed out the fact that the decision making process to revive the full dge slong ma ordination should not be shadowed by the differences of the three vinayas as they are mostly based on geographical boundaries (restricted to sīmā) but the rules are more or less equivalent if not equal (Wallace 2022, 877). In this regard Carola Roloff mention that the word nikāya is not familiar in the vinayapitaka but rather they are this gives the autonomy to different **saṅgha** to make independent decisions based on their situations in concern. So the main role in a decision is that of the space, time and boundaries (Roloff 2020, 285). Also in the same spirit if we consider modifications in the vinaya codes it must be understood that they are meant for much more of the human-calling on social justice rather than being stuck in legal rigidity. In this aspect Clarke has rightly reflected that the academics on the study of possibilities of the full ordination of the Tibetan nuns should not be addressed on legal or illegality parameters sticking on to interpretation of the vinyas but rather the call should be of ideal and acceptable or rather the inner calling of social justice for recognition of the daughters of the Buddha, practicing under Tibetan traditions (Clarke 2011, 603-631). The aspect that needs to be pondered upon is the creation of the dge slong ma identity rather than being stuck with differences which can be addressed on

humanitarian and social justice grounds for the betterment and empowerment of monastic women practicing in Tibetan schools. Several scholars such as Shyane Clarke, Bhikkhu Anālayo, **Bhikṣuṇī** Jampa Tsedroen (Carola Roloff), Ute Huesken has extensively contributed to this genre and thought and has been inspirational in addressing and voicing the issue in the right tune. How many times the differences in legal codes that may be mere differences in understanding several schools of translations that started between third-fourth century C.E can put a question of validation on freewill and choice of women to realize the full potential of homelessness being subject to translation differences of male centric translators and difference interpreters of early canons (Clarke 2011, 603-631). Moreover to be precise it must be well understood that sticking on to the essence of the vinaya codes is necessary but not to the absolute rigidity, as it is bound to be modified with changes in pertinent situations over ages and the task of passing on the teachings is not just merely a passive role but a passage of the codes based on individual interpretations of the Buddhist masters. Vinayas are actually a shifting paradigm that should adopt demands and scenarios of changing times and era. The independent variable should be the societal changes and as dependent variable the vinayas should adopt accordingly. Perhaps that why in terms of education best practices of the nuns the debates play a pivotal role to share their thought process with their peers, which is the most ideal case of developing the knowledge. Given the well proved hypothesis that the editing, modification and eradication of the texts were mainly carried by the, monks it is more likely that the changes have a status quo bias that caters the male centric views (by default even if not conscious) and suitability of a monk's life. Further the ever-persistent gaps and different versions of narratives regarding the going forth of the first group of women as almswomen into the Buddhist order is forever an issue of critical examination as much of it differs from version to version because of the oral transmissions. In such a regard it should be well taken care of that approaching the life and practices of the contemporary **Bhikṣuṇī saṅghas**, the daughters of the Buddha must not be burdened with the rigidity and block ends of the age old rules but what should be taken forward is the essence of the formulation of those rules and the reason behind coding the monastic law. The exact law should be modified based on suitability of practice from time-to-time ages after ages (Horner 2019, 82-83). Further at a basic ethical level the ordination of the novice nuns should be done by elder **Bhikṣuṇīs** to create a more comfortable space respecting their space and privacy as they are required to answer several answers (some of which much personal and requires certain self declarations) before the final vow. Thereby the space becomes more complex given the lack of female body of fully

ordained nuns (Horner 2019, 94-98). In this respect the point is certainly not who is giving the final nod to commence the full ordination as it is subject to many complexities, but the effort of HH The 14th Dalai Lama and HH The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa has been phenomenal in advocating the cause at global platforms. We as lay beings consider them the living embodiment of the most compassionate Avalokiteśvara, then that should drive us towards the wider prospective of brighter side of the opportunities of female enlightenment given the facilitation of the dge slong ma vows. The motivation should be goddess Tara and all the great female teachers and yoginīs in Tibetan history and the female siddhas who has proved over ages the significant aura/impact of feminine wisdom. Then what holds us back? The main intention should be to make the spiritual and monastic frameworks more comfortable to women in the Buddhist monastic order following the spirit of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. India should be the most sacred women friendly geography for female mendicants to explore their spiritual quest. The question is that maybe there was existence of fully ordained nuns even before the admission of Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī but her admission with other Śākyan women in to the order after three times denial on being advocated by Ānanda is again a matter of confusion as the Buddha clearly acknowledges the fact that they (women) are clearly capable of achieving the fruits of reclusive ship?(Williams 2000, 167-173). However the sanctification of the event of full ordination by a single ordination by the order of monks happens from Gotamī, as she is the mother of the Buddha himself and the event occurs after the full proof narrative of questioning the Buddha himself on his mother's debt by Ānanda (Ohnuma 2006, 861-901). Unlike much of the past scholarship I won't argue on the subordination of the Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha with the eight heavy rules as that has been also much debated in the past regarding whether it's an addition to the Pālī Canon and the order of the rules vary in other vinayas which makes its validity more doubtful as it is often interpreted as the later addition and result of modification and editing of text by male editors (Davids and Oldenberg 1885, 320-335). If we take a deeper look into the existent Bhikkhunī/ Bhikṣuṇī ordination lineage traditions there are mainly three the Theravādan, Dharmaguptaka and the Mūlasarvāstivādan schools, out of six earlier schools. The fact that the full ordination (dge slong ma) ordination of the Tibetan nuns never happened or may be broken, though some scholars claim ordination of Princess Lakshmi (dge slong ma Dpal mo) who founded the fasting ritual and tough us to overcome ill health and sufferings in a much positive manner.¹ Similarly several

1. For details on this see <https://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/70.0-&L=220.html>. Remembering Ordained Nuns: Models for Modern Tibetan Community. Accessed on 10th October at 1:00 P.M

past attempts are said to have been made to revive the order of fully ordained nuns such as *Gron mgon chos rgyal' Phags pa* in 1235-1280 and *Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan* in 1428-1507. However they are mostly claimed in accordance with the findings of Tibetan scholar Geshe Tashi Tsering who was serving the Department of Religion and Culture and made considerable attempt to trace the lineage of fully ordained nun in Tibet, however the findings were much contested and challenged which do not give us a full proof evidence of full ordination of nuns in Tibet (Schneider 2012, 115). Further other claims of fully ordained nuns during the fourteenth – seventeenth Century also arises as mentioned in the works of Fan Wu who explores the hagiographies of Chokyi Dronma who is considered an incarnation of wisdom *Ḍākinī* Sonam Peldren and Shākya Chokden. In similar manner attempts are also made by scholars like Dan Martin and Darcie Price-Wallace based on *rnam thar* (biography) of several realized female practitioners in respect of their teachings with their gurus, however none of the accounts of full ordination are openly accepted the Tibetan religious authorities (Wu 2022, 1037). Although in records there is no official lineage of fully ordained women in the Tibetan tradition as the first ordination of monks was conducted by monks alone at Śāmye monastery in Tibet when the Nālandā abbot Sri Śāntarakṣita (zhi ba tsho) accompanied by only thirty monks visited Tibet in the late 8th Century 775 C.E during the reign of King Trisong Dentsen.¹ This is also debated on the basis that there are no written records of this instance and much are in oral traditions. The simultaneous claim also mentions that there was fully ordained Bhikṣhunīs in Tibet which got broken on the persecution of King Langdarma in 9th Century.² The *dge slong ma* ordination never happened due to lack of the quorum of fully ordained *Bhikṣunīs* which is need for the dual ordination method. With the enthusiastic support of HH The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa a positive way forward paved up with the full ordination of Buddhist Nuns under Tibetan lineages in the Dharmaguptaka lineages which is prevalent mainly in China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Korea. However, it is considered a fault and some portion of the Tibetan authorities discourage such higher ordination (as the nuns of Mūlasarvāstivādan tradition receiving

1. See <https://dakinitranslations.com/2022/04/24/like-stars-in-the-day-the-descent-of-female-arhatis-the-existence-of-fully-ordained-nuns-in-tibet-gelongma-nuns-during-the-earlier-and-later-teachings-in-tibet-vows-given-by-fully/> The teachings of 17th Karmapa on Like Stars In The day, The Descent of Female Arahatis: Fully Ordained Tibetan Buddhist Nuns In Tibet, Past, Present and Future on Day 13 accessed on October 10th, 2022 at 3:30P.M.

2. See present status of Bhikṣhunīs in Tibet at <https://www.bhiksuniordination.org/issue.html> accessed on October 11th 2022 at 3:00 P.M.

ordination from Dharmaguptaka tradition is perceived as minute fault (nyeja) which is also rectified ritualistically through sojong confession ceremony twice a month.

The question that is a concern is why the debate of single **saṅgha** ordination or dual **saṅgha** ordination of The Tibetan nuns? The question we all put forward is given the lack of dge slong ma ordination in Tibet how would have the Buddha go forward in a 21st Century setting? Also if this question is pertinent the accuracy can be only be achieved if we ask the question again how Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī would have placed the request or make the move? The full ordination of Bhiksunis in Tibetan traditions require 12 Bhikshunīs and 10 **bhikṣus** to complete the quorum for the full ordination. However, the Indian Bhikkhunīs never made their way to Tibet and in India the **Bhikṣunī saṅgha** existed up to 12th Century. If we look at the history in India in the 3rd century C.E the daughter of Emperor Aśoka Sanghamitta became a Bhikkhunī/ Bhikshunī and with other **Bhikṣunīs** travelled to Sri Lanka to establish the order of the nuns. Finally in 434 C.E the Sri Lankan nuns were invited to China to complete the full ordination of nuns in presence of monk **Saṅghavarman** in which 300 Chinese nuns were ordained. (Pi Chiu ni chuan shu). At present the three possibilities of valid options left for reviving the full ordination for nuns in Tibet:

1. 10 Mūlasarvāstivāda bhikṣus with 12 Dharmaguptaka Bhikshunīs
2. 10 Mūlasarvāstivāda **Bhikṣu** alone
3. 10 Dharmaguptaka **Bhikṣus** and 10 Dharmaguptaka Bhikshunīs

This method has been ventured by several nuns who being from the Mūlasarvāstivādan Tibetan order received the full ordination under Dharmaguptaka tradition (Heirman 2008, 174-93) which creates a fault and the legality of the method is also questioned. 1 In the Tibetan canon the ideal case is the dual **saṅgha** ordination through the legal act of las which involves a passing of motion and three times proclamation which adds on to formulation of a resolution which results to completion of the full ordination. (gsol ba dang bzhi'i las) (Roloff 2020, 19-20) .

The Dialogue on Possibilities, Methodologies and Rigidity of vinaya Codes

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1. Revival of The Bhiksuni Vow in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition, authored by Committee for Bhiksuni Ordination in the Tibetan Tradition (CBO) edited by the Foundation For Buddhist Studies obtained at DGL nunnery.

The aspect that raises the concern is that in the Tibetan canon the eight gurudhammas are mentioned at the end of the full ordination (*upasampadā*) and there have been enough questions and concerns regarding the validity of the eight rules as they are in different order and capacity in different vinayas. Scholars such as Chung has also proposed the fact that the initially the ordination must have been done by a single *saṅgha* solely the nuns alone but later modifications and editing must have led to the clause of dual *saṅgha* ordination to ensure the traditional notion of male dominance and so-called protection and defining boundaries for women. However the complete addition of the eight rules is not an acceptable proposition and certainly Mahāprajāpati accepted it as the condition of admission into the order but here the question is of much more the later advocacy of ordination by both the *saṅgha* of monks and nuns which may have been initially the responsibility of the nuns alone and in support of the order of the elder monks. In this respect when we may perceive that the ordination of the first order of nuns were done by the order of elder monks on approval of the Buddha himself but there are also several theories justifying the foundation and ordination of nuns after the nibbana of the Buddha solely by the order of monks. In this regard Mahāprajāpati becomes the center of the narrative because of her status as the queen and foster mother of the Buddha and thereby gaining sanctification and a more legitimate acceptance of being the founder of the order of the nuns (Hinüber, 3-29). But such a bifurcated argument cannot make us reach at a feasible point talking about the possibilities of the full ordination.

A better emphasis must be laid on the dual *saṅgha* ecumenical method of ordination though in exceptional cases the ordinations by bhikkhus are also accepted, but in a contemporary setting a concern that must be discussed is why not a single ordination by the *Bhikṣhunī saṅgha* on a standalone basis, so that young girls who opt to be the *śrāmaṇerī*, can no doubt relate to the practices and the methodologies much more from a women oriented perspective, with a better understanding of the hurdles, challenges as well as the struggle in overcoming the burden of historical rules which bind their practices and how moderations to rigidity can happen and to what extent it is acceptable in a 21st Century setting?. In the contemporary setting I completely second the stand of author Ven. Carola Roloff (Jampa Tsedroen) that it's not about transgression of the gurudhammas and not about abiding to it blindly but more about viability. The first gurudhamma (The order and numbering differs in different vinayas) which binds female monastic (senior most) in Buddhism to a merely initiated monk, is not a very acceptable proposition, as now there are senior most well realized and awakened nuns who probably guide young monks and there

are also female tulkus whose teachings are widely enjoyed and related with the daily practice. Given the request of Mahāprajāpatī to the Buddha on the gurudhamma that requires salutation by a senior most nun to a monk, who may be even be just a novice. The question is rightly pointed out by Anālayo that in certain version after the request for ordination made by Mahāprajāpatī in certain versions (Mūlasarvāstivādan) version to my knowledge initially the response from Buddha is to wear white clothes and stay as a householder lay female follower and practice the dhamma, however in other versions the denial comes at the first instance (DhammaDinna 2016, 90-121).

This opens up a wider prospect of debate that the Buddha was not inclined to the denial of admission of women into the order but rather much more concerned about the lack of spiritual facility at that point of time and the lack of societal support to female mendicants which made him hesitant ((Roloff 2020, 274-290). Also heavy precepts means to be followed on a priority basis, but in all cases it is not a paccitiya offence and in some cases it is mentioned as a dukkata offence which again raises question on its mandate because these differences raises a possibility of inclusion at a much later period and not as during the times of Buddha, pronounced by the Buddha.¹ In the Kullavagga section on the duties of the Bhikkhunīs the Buddha allows the female monastic aspirants to receive the full upasampadā from the order of monks on a standalone basis (Davids and Oldenberg 2014, 320-328). In this respect a justified clarification has been given by Anālayo that as far as the Pālī canon is concerned in case of gurudhamma four and six scope of dual **saṅgha** ordination has been provided by the Buddha himself, but since at the time of request of Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī there were no existent fully ordained Bhikkhunī/ Bhikshunī **saṅgha** so the responsibility lied on single order ordination provided by the Bhikkhus. This marks an exception that in case of a nonexistent fully ordained order of nuns the ordination to female monastic aspirants (upasampadāpekkhā)² in a Buddhist order is to be given by the elder monks. But talking about the aspect mentioned earlier that the ordination requires confession of stumbling blocks(Anālayo 2017, 17) or limitations by the Bhikkhunīs/ Bhikshunī to the **saṅgha** offering the full ordination, in this case the order of elder monks.

The female candidates seeking the higher ordination felt embarrassed and uncomfortable (Ibid. 20-22). In this regard one needs to have a clear idea of

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1. In Case of the Theravadin vinaya in Kullavagga the denial of abiding the gurudhamma is a Dukkata offence but in Mūlasarvāstivādan vinaya it is a pācittiya offence.
 2. The term used to differentiate between a female aspiring to receive the full ordination and a fully ordained Bhikkhunī.

the possibilities of the single ordination by monks, which is also actually a twofold process that the enquiries regarding the stumbling blocks are made by the elder nuns and then finally the ordination is approved by the order of the monks to avoid any sort of embarrassment and most importantly the loophole in this mechanism is that the Bhikkhunīs ordination can be also requested by a messenger in case the Bhikkhunī is not comfortable to approach the order of monks for the same (Ibid.) Similar principle has been guiding light in attempts for past full ordination in the Tibetan Buddhist history including claims of fully ordained dge slong ma during fourteenth Century who are disciples of Mkhan Chen Bka' bzhi pa chen po Rig pa'I seng ge and many eminent lamas do not recognize such claims as full proof to be traced back to explore the possibility of full ordination in current days in the Tibetan pantheon (Schneider 2012, 115-119). The main aspect that must be kept in mind while understanding the full ordination for nuns across the three main vinaya traditions is that it is preferable to have a dual **sangha** ordination, in case situation does not permit so there is no other option other than to go for a single order ordination done by the elder monks on a sole basis. In case of a stumbling block once cleared by the Bhikkhunī **sangha**, the final completion of the ordination has to be done by the bhikkhus (ekato-upasampannā) then to authorize by order of monks (Analāyo 2017, 18). It is in this spirit Carola Roloff in her path breaking work on the possibilities of Full ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivādan tradition gives us a detailed explanation on the validity of the ecumenical ordination (Roloff 2020, 276).

Rethinking Ordination by the Bhikṣunī sangha On a Sole Basis

The issue of full ordination of the Tibetan nuns must be approached in the right spirit of ordination of Bhikkhunīs by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī after her ordination through the acceptance of the eight gadudhammas, in the manner she took care to initiate the spiritual career of other women willing to join the **sangha**. Though in gender scholarship in Buddhism it has also been debated whether there was an existent **sangha** of nuns even before the going forth of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (Williams 2000, 167–173). If we take a deeper look into the Sutra of Hundred Deeds Karmaśataka of the Kangyur (las brgya tham pa) we see examples of several ordination done by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī on being advise by the Buddha himself such as that of **Kacaṅkalā**, (received direct instruction to go forth as a novice from Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī herself).¹ In this

1. See Verse no 3.6, In the Kangyur, Part Three, The Story of **Kacaṅkalā**. In Degé Kangyur, vol. 73 (mdo sde, ha), folios 1.b–309.a, and vol. 74 (mdo sde, a), folios 1.b–128.b. las brgya tham pa. Accessed at <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh340.html?part=UT22084-073->

regard keeping in mind the legal code hurdles and the consent of the senior sangha members I would like to refer to the possibilities of the ordination putting the case of early Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā, whose father did not give her the consent to join the nunnery, despite of her strong wish to be ordained. The wish on being heard by the Buddha himself comes to an extraordinary decision of providing her with the vows through a messenger (Utpalavarṇā) as she expressed her desire of joining the order to Bhikkhunī Utpalavarṇā who in turn gets guided by Ānanda, (The Buddha asks Ānanda to guide Utpalavarṇā to carry out the ordination of Dhammadinnā by initially giving her the three refuge, and then the five precepts and finally the ten precepts of a novice śrāmaṇerī).

The dhamma was very soon well realized by Dhammadinnā who became the śrotāpanna or the stream enterer. She was also conferred the non returning anagāmini by Upalvanna stage by stage on being guided by the Buddha to make Dhammadinnā realize her full potential as she finally achieves the state of arahati. The guidance came from the Buddha himself thereby satisfying the consent of dual sangha as a representative poll method. In fact when her marriage was being called for by her parents with the rich merchant Visakha, he supported her wish to pursue her Bhikkhunī dreams at a later point of time Visakha received teachings from Dhammadinnā herself creating an excellent example of not so common instance of a fully ordained Bhikkhunī teaching a man with high perfection addressing her husband as a friend (Yao 2015, 216-253). The ksudrakavastu of the Mulasarvastivādan vinaya mentions the basics of eligibility of the full ordination where a śrāmaṇerī after receiving the vows takes up the śikṣamāṇā vows and then after completion of two probationary years as a novice, once attaining the age of 20 is eligible for the full ordination. In the present situation the novice nuns in Tibetan traditions only take the 36 vows instead of 364 as per the Mūlasarvāstivādan (gzhi thams cad yod pa smra ba'i sde) (Anālayo 2017, 931-961). In this regard Bhikkhu Analayo gives us a detailed record of the possibilities of ordination (though following the Cullavagga narrative) but still may be a point of consideration to look forward as a step to sort out the possibilities of full ordination of the Tibetan nuns:

1. By full acceptance of the eight gurudhammas (only in exceptional cases, only applicable for the ordination of Gotamī) but has important implications, though not a feasible option in contemporary times.
2. By a single ordination by the elder monks

3. Dual *saṅgha* ordination (ecumenical)
4. By messenger (representative method)
5. Learning from Sri Lanka (Queen Anula and her followers requested from King Mahinda, but had to wait for Sanghamitta to finally do the ordination)¹

Coming on to the first one though the full ordination through was only applicable to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī but it is not really a ethical option to bind women to the subordinating rules which may be necessary at a different time and space and not in a 21st Century scenario. Because repeatedly the Bhikkhus to cooperate and help the Bhikkhunīs on upostha day, help in invitation ceremony pavarana, help in observance of penance mannatta and at last on the full ordination upasampadā. The higher ordination by acceptance of eight gurudhamma not only holds for Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī but also the 500 Śākyan women who received it with her (Analayo 2015, 401-448).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations can only work when the emotion of the intended benefactors taken into account. It is a very sensitive and concerning issue that how geography can be made more women friendly in terms of their expressions as well as their spiritual spaces over and above facilities for religious practices. Have we questioned much on if given an autonomy to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and Yaśodharā how they have paved the path of the nuns in a much women centric manner? Buddha always was in support of advancement of the *bhikṣuṇī saṅgha* but his analysis of pros and cons and probable upcoming challenges led to modification of rules, and at times special instructions to the *Bhikshu saṅgha* in regard to making religious, social and spiritual journey of women more cherishing. He always considered Kṣemā, Utpalavarṇā and Dhammadinnā as wise a Mahākāśyapa and Maudgalyayana (Analayo 2017). Have we ever considered how textual limitations placed on women capacity and realization of full potential? How even nunnery setups affect the mental conditioning of young girls aspiring to receive a full ordination? How the economy of merit still affects the continuance of Bhikkhunī practice and how sacred spaces can be more women friendly in terms of leadership programs by eminent/geshemas for young novices. In the very recent times in Bhutan

1. In this case King Mahinda on his arrival to Sri Lanka advocated the full ordination of nuns by Bhikkhunīs only as the fully ordained order of nuns was existent in India and thereby the ordination happened when Bhikkhunīs from India took the responsibility.

(Taksang) being presided by the spiritual head HH The Je Khenpo (Drukpa Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism) with the blessings of His Majesty the 5th King of Bhutan, Drukgyal Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.¹ The spiritual head considers it an excellent step and not only a right step looking at the need of the hour to recognize the nuns as fully ordained. In that spirit we must contemplate on the possibilities and opportunities of the **bhikṣuṇī** vow by the order of Mūlasarvāstivādan monks in Tibetan Buddhism or if one do consider a urgency to deliver the full ordination by a **saṅgha** of **bhikṣuṇī** alone that can be considered provided all the Tibetan spiritual leaders give a nod understanding the need of access of the nuns to higher levels of spiritual practices (may be in that case by ten Mūlasarvāstivādan monks with six Dharmaguptaka and six Theravadin nuns from Sri Lanka) or twelve Dharmaguptaka nuns in presence of a committee of fully ordained Theravadin Bhikkhunīs from Sri Lanka as they may be seen as a continuance of the Bhikkhunī lineage from mainland India itself. to maintain an ethical position of the permission of all living **bhikṣuṇī** traditions). Many may say that what is the vinaya basis of such a thought, the question is much more of inclusion and humanity to have equal representation and to open access of knowledge and spiritual heights. There are times when the Buddha himself has talked about exceptions and to find ethical solutions, given the special case of ordination of early Bhikkhunī Dhammānā by **Utpalavarṇā** on being guided by **Ānanda** on the permission of the Buddha himself adopting a representative poll method, the same can be adopted by the Tibetan religious authorities HH The Dalai Lama and HH The Gyalwang Karmapa together guiding Dharmaguptaka and Theravadin nuns to do the full ordination of Tibetan nuns adopting inspiration from this representative poll method. Moreover if we take into mind the suggestions of King Mahinda on his arrival to Sri Lanka and his concern to fully ordain the nuns by the Bhikkhunī/ **bhikṣuṇī saṅgha** as at that time the fully ordained order of nuns was existent in India the basic spirit goes in this way that if any fully ordained **saṅgha** of nuns are existent it must be their responsibility to carry out the full ordination in case of Tibet. Standing in the contemporary times we all welcome the step taken by HH the Je Khenpo in Bhutan to revive the full ordination in Tibetan tradition but there also lies an enormous potential to form a group of fully ordained Theravadin nuns from Sri Lanka and Dharmaguptaka nuns from China to take up the responsibility jointly for their sisters in dhamma practicing in Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivādan traditions. In this regard it must be well understood that given the voice of the early

1. See <https://www.tibetanreview.net/nuns-get-full-ordination-in-tibetan-buddhism-for-the-first-time-in-bhutan/> accessed on 1/11/2022.

textual narratives which enhances male experiences in Buddhist spirituality, a careful and more compassionate and caring thought process must be adopted to think about the need of full ordination of the nuns in Tibetan traditions and the decision must be inclusive of societal and community based emotions and the thoughts of handing over the spiritual heritage of lineage of female mendicants in Buddhism to a new generation and making the space more women friendly to them. It may be argued that is awkward and realisations not enough, questions may arise on the need of the full ordination but the soul of the monastic community should always go for the middle path to promote both educational development through geshema programs as well and making the dge slong ma ordination happen to give the nuns more higher access to spiritual capital and participation in sacred spaces.

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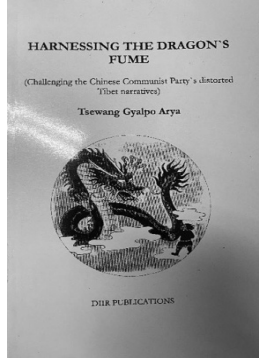
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Book Review of Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya's Harnessing the Dragon's Fume



Review of Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya's *Harnessing the Dragon's Fume: Challenging the Chinese Communist Party's Distorted Tibet Narratives*, Published by: Department of Information and International Relations, Narthang Press, Dharamsala, India, 2021. ISBN 978-93-85578-23-6

By Jason Morgan

Many people around the world have come to understand that the much-touted “rise” of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is not as “peaceful” as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) insists. In just the past few years, for instance, the PRC has overrun the formerly free city-state of Hong Kong, provoked border clashes with India, openly and repeatedly threatened violence against the sovereign nation of Taiwan, conducted near-daily incursions into Japan’s sovereign waters around the Senkaku Islands, built environmentally disastrous sandbanks in the South China Sea, and acted with belligerent impunity in territorial disputes which the PRC has instigated with Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. China is also ensnaring nations such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Greece in Belt-Road debt traps, while engaging in what many claim to be neo-colonialist and racist exploitation in Africa. It is obvious to anyone with an uncensored Internet connection that the rise of the People’s Republic of China has been anything but peaceful.

But what about Tibet? With the exception of Hong Kong, the preyed-upon nations mentioned above are not behind the Great Chinese Firewall. It is

therefore possible for accurate information about China's actions in those places to reach the outside world. Tibet, however, is a different story. Tibet is under the same militarized communist dictatorship as the rest of the People's Republic of China, only the Chinese Communist Party's rule in Tibet is even harsher and more repressive than in areas where the Han Chinese are an ethnic majority. (The same can be said, of course, about East Turkestan and Southern Mongolia.) Tibet is historically, linguistically, religiously, culturally, and legally complete separate from anything Chinese. But emphasizing these differences, and a fortiori denouncing the moral travesty of the PRC's unwelcome domination of, and cultural, religious, and ethnic genocide against, an innocent people, are difficult when so much of the "information" which comes out of Tibet is CCP propaganda. How can one know the facts about Tibet so that one can have the confidence to speak out against what China is doing there?

The answer is in a splendid 153-page volume by Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, director of the Tibet House in Tokyo and longtime public servant with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala, India. *Harnessing the Dragon's Fume* is an apt title for Dr. Arya's book, as the work provides the information non-specialists need to understand what is happening in and around Tibet and thereby counter-argue ("harness the dragon's fume") the disinformation put out by Beijing. Dr. Arya is also a highly capable guide to the ins-and-outs of Tibet. Holding a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhist Studies from Delhi University, as well as other degrees from Panjab University (B.A.), Annamalai University (M.A. in Economics), Delhi University (M.A. in Japanese Studies), and Chiyoda College of Business in Tokyo (Diploma in International Trade and Economics), and fluent in Tibetan, English, Hindi, and Japanese, Dr. Arya writes with penetrating insight into the history and current affairs of Tibet. I know of few other scholars who can range so widely across so many sources in so many languages and boil information down to essentials for the benefit of English-language readers.

Harnessing the Dragon's Fume is not only insightful. It is also highly readable. The book comprises mainly a collection of short, journalistic essays on topics such as the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (chapter 2), the made-in-China coronavirus pandemic (chapter 15), the PRC's outright lies about its defense capabilities (chapter 10), His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Policy (chapter 8), and China's dismal human rights record in Tibet (chapter 11). There are also slightly longer essays on Tibetan history (chapters 1 and 4), culture (chapter 20), and religion (chapters 21 and 22). Readers can easily choose

essays according to interest and work through the volume in any order they wish. Dr. Arya's words are always straightforward, his information is accurate, and his presentation is clear and rooted in extensive documentation. *Harnessing the Dragon's Fume* is excellent both as an introduction for those unfamiliar with Tibet, and for specialists who wish to delve more deeply (through Dr. Arya's analysis as well as through his many citations) into the details of Tibetan politics, religion, culture, and history.

I profited greatly from *Harnessing the Dragon's Fume*. I recommend it to anyone with even a passing interest in Tibet, East Asia, human rights, or national identity. (I have the great honor of joining my recommendation to that of Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the former Sikyong (President) of the Central Tibetan Administration, whose foreword graces the opening of *Harnessing the Dragon's Fume*.) I recommend Dr. Arya's book especially, and with great urgency, to those inside the CCP who are responsible for Tibet's ongoing occupation and for the cultural, religious, and ethnic genocide which China is perpetrating against the Tibetan people. May Dr. Arya's words of truth be the occasion for a change of heart.

The book is available at the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India. For pdf version please click here: <https://tibet.net/harnessing-the-dragons-fume/>

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