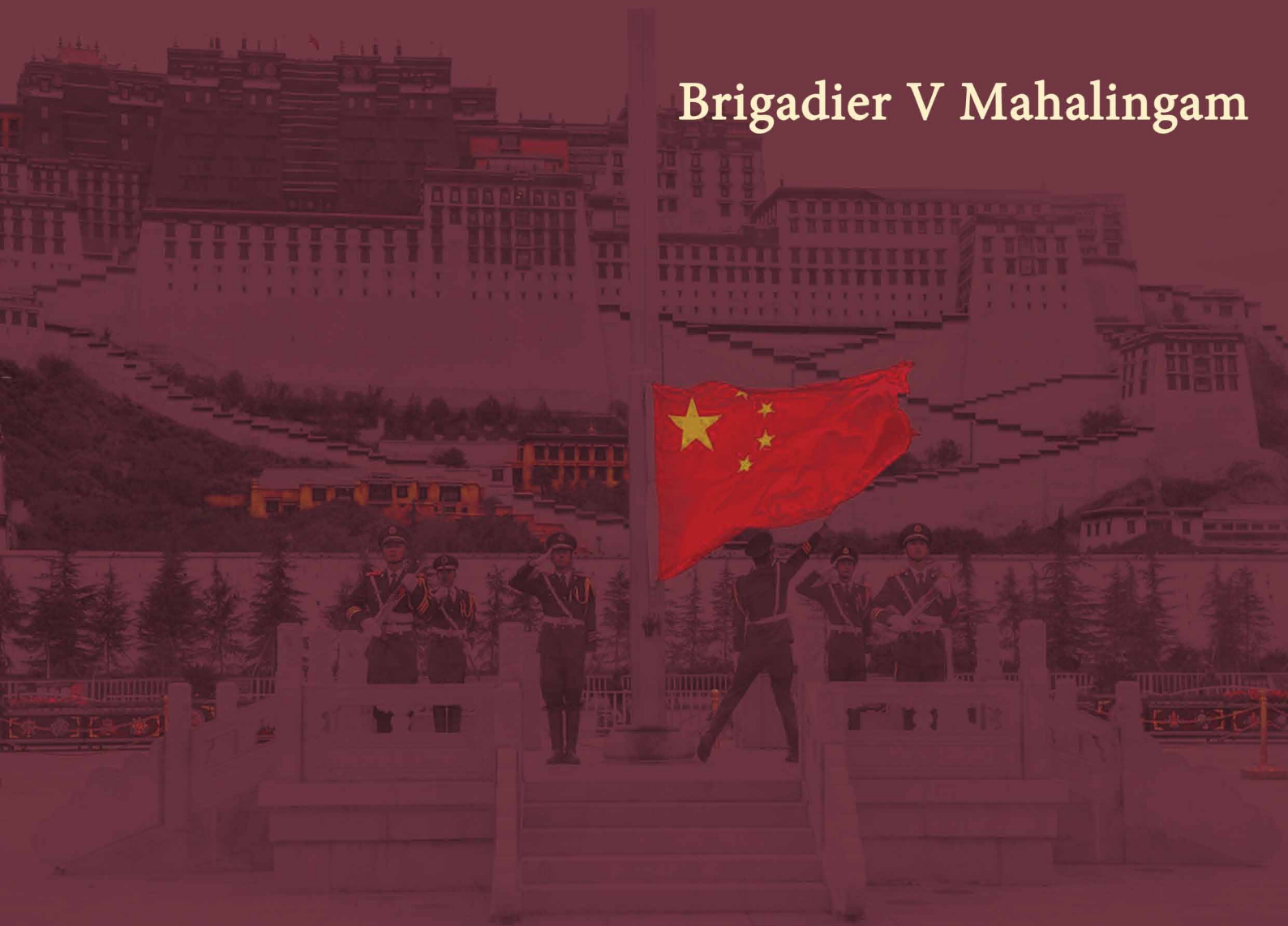




Vivekananda International Foundation

# What are the Chinese up to on the Other Side of the Indian Borders in Tibet and the Implications

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VIF Paper | August 2019



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Published in August 2019 by  
Vivekananda International Foundation  
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## About The Author



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## What are the Chinese up to on the Other Side of the Indian Borders in Tibet and the Implications



Source: [https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DGy0\\_XBUwAAhr2a.jpg](https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DGy0_XBUwAAhr2a.jpg)

### The Tibetan Scene

Kept Secret for two days till after his tour ended, Member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) and the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Lhasa, Nyingchi (Nyingtri in Chinese) and Shannan (Lhoka in Chinese), from July 25 to 27, 2018<sup>1</sup>, the latter two bordering Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as part of South Tibet. It was an atypical visit. Atypical because, of the seven Prime Ministers which China has had since 1949, he was the first one to visit the land which China had occupied forcibly after a military conflict in the Qamdo area of the Western Kham after crossing the Jinsha River on September 06, 1950. It was the first visit of a Chinese Prime Minister after establishing the 'Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)' in 1965, making Tibet a provincial-level autonomous region of China. Chinese Presidents are yet to visit the region. During the visit, Li vowed to boost infrastructure investment to improve the economy, and called for ethnic unity between Tibetans and the Han Chinese<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 'Premier Li stresses sustainable development, prosperity in Tibet', Xinhua, July 29, 2018, available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/29/c\\_137354330.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/29/c_137354330.htm) accessed on January 12, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Lobsang Tenchoe, 'Chinese Premier completes secretive Tibet visit', The Tibet Express, July 30, 2018, available at <http://tibetexpress.net/8720/chinese-premier-completes-secretive-tibet-visit/> accessed on January 18, 2019.

Earlier, visits by party officials and junior level Chinese leadership had taken place. Standing Committee members Hu Yaobang and Jiang Zemin had visited Tibet in 1980 and 1990 respectively. Xi Jinping in the capacity of Vice-President had also visited Lhasa in 2011 for the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the 17 Point Agreement of 1951, an agreement signed under duress which China calls the ‘peaceful liberation’ of Tibet<sup>3</sup>. Having forcibly occupied Tibet, China was aware that the people would not accept its leadership being seen around as rulers of their land. Any visible protests or violence as it had happened in Tienanmen Square in Beijing in 1989 necessitating employment of security forces and use of force would have brought back international focus on Tibet and the issue of its independence. In China’s assessment, there was a need to prepare the people to accept its leadership which needed time, resources and efforts.

The present visit of the Chinese Prime Minister to Tibet underlines China’s confidence that Tibet has been successfully tamed. Considering that issues pertaining to TAR are not directly under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Prime Minister’s responsibilities<sup>4</sup>, was it the prelude to the Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to the area confirming the integration of Tibet with China?

So, what all actions have Chinese initiated in TAR and the changes that have been brought about since it was annexed? What are their implications?

### **Building a New Socialist Countryside**

Under a policy to ‘Build a New Socialist Countryside’ in Tibet, China embarked on a mission to rehouse and relocate families in TAR, thus changing the demography and refashioning their way of life. Reacting to the policy, Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch says, “The scale and speed at which the Tibetan rural population is being remodeled by mass rehousing and relocation policies are unprecedented in the post-Mao era,<sup>5</sup>” While the official justification for the rehousing and relocation policies in Tibetan areas have been economic, the Chinese government has made it clear that these policies are an integral part of its larger political objectives of combating ethno-national or “separatist” sentiments among Tibetans and are designed to strengthen its political control over the Tibetan rural population<sup>6</sup>.

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3 ‘Xi Jinping visits Lhasa’ International Tibet Network, July 19, 2011, available at <https://tibetnetwork.org/xi-jinping-visits-lhasa/> accessed on January 12, 2019.

4 ‘Constitution of the People’s Republic of China’ Articles 88 and 89 available at <http://en.people.cn/constitution/constitution.html> accessed on January 15, 2019.

5 ‘China: End Involuntary Rehousing, Relocation of Tibetans’ Human Rights Watch, June 27, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/27/china-end-involuntary-rehousing-relocation-tibetans> accessed on January 18, 2019.

6 Ibid.

## Construction of ‘Moderately Well-off Villages’ along the Border

Since 2016 China has invested over 100 million Yuan (\$15million) to develop infrastructure in border villages with less than 100 families as a part of a broader plan to build model villages with moderate prosperity. 628 villages along the border are being developed similarly with a view to lift these villages out of poverty. It is said that the construction of well-off villages along the border is meant to advance the living and working conditions in surrounding villages<sup>7</sup>. By 2020, accessibility to roads to these areas is expected to reach 100 percent.

During the National People’s Congress (NPC) which concluded on March 20, 2018<sup>8</sup>, Phurbu Dhondup, a Deputy and Governor of Shannan, affirmed that in the Provinces of Hunan, Hubei and Anhui (North of Bhutan and Tawang District) there were 96 such border villages which would ‘make the dramatic transition’ from poor border villages to prosperous ones with electricity, first rate access roads, irrigation systems and potable water. Out of the 17-member Tibetan delegation at the NPC, four were from the border areas opposite India. During a press conference in Beijing, Kesang Dikyï, a member who comes from Metok, (North of Tuting sector of Arunachal) said “Our school building was very poor; teachers and students had to pick grass to cover the roof. The grass was taller than we were, so when we were walking back we’d often trip, and we often had our hands cut. If we didn’t pick the grass, rainwater would leak into the classroom.”<sup>9</sup> All this has changed in the recent past.

Similarly, Tsona Country (Same as Cona), opposite Tawang, has invested 519 million Yuan in the construction of nine Border ‘Well off Villages’ which is expected to benefit 1961 people in 617 households. Magmang, the first village north of Tawang, located in the Lepo valley of Tsona Country was developed into ‘Magmang Ecological Civilisation Demonstration Village’ in December 2014 and was put into operation in January 2015<sup>10</sup>. In 2016, the Village was recognised as ‘China’s beautiful Leisure Village’ by China’s Ministry of Agriculture. China has 26 National key tourist attractions and Lepo Valley is listed as one amongst them<sup>11</sup>.

Villages in TAR have been rebuilt or remodeled according to a set of standards laid down by the Government. It entails providing ‘eight connections to rural homes’: water, electricity, natural gas,

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7 Daqiong, ‘Infrastructure lifts Tibet border villages out of poverty’, China Daily, December 27, 2017, available at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201712/27/WS5a436a67a31008cf16da3d0e.html> accessed on January 27, 2017.

8 ‘China’s inroads near the Indian borders’, Claude Arpi, Claude Arpi Blogs, March 29, 2018, available at <http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2018/03/> accessed on April 10, 2019.

9 Claude Arpi, ‘China’s inroads near the Indian borders’ The Pioneer, March 29, 2018, available at <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/columnists/chinas-inroads-near-the-indian-borders.html> accessed on January 16, 2019.

10 ‘The Party carries the people in its heart....when they are away from the border’ Claude Arpi, Claude Arpi Blogs, October 29, 2018, available at <http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2018/10/the-party-carries-people-in-its-heart.html> accessed on April 10, 2019.

11 Claude Arpi, ‘The Party carries the people in its heart .....when they are away from the border’ Blogs, October 29, 2018, available at <http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2018/10/the-party-carries-people-in-its-heart.html> accessed on January 16, 2019.



roads, telecommunications, state media broadcasting, postal services, and an ‘exquisite environment’. Under a policy labeled ‘Comfortable Housing,<sup>12</sup>’ Tibetans whose houses are considered unsuitable are directed to demolish and rebuild their houses according to specified Government Standards either on the same spot or in new settlements located alongside existing or newly built roads. Under this scheme, the cost of construction or remodeling of the new homes is met by a combination of state subsidies, bank loans, individual’s savings, and other household assets. The policy of ‘Building a New Socialist Countryside’ is being described as a way to establish “long term peace and stability<sup>13</sup>” over China’s borderlands indicating Beijing’s long term strategic goals across the borders.

### **A look at a Demo Village for ‘Comfortable Living’**

As a part of the scheme to develop villages for ‘comfortable living’, Yumai Township in Shannan was remodeled as demo village for ‘comfortable living’. According to Dawa, the Party chief of the Township, the village will include 56 homes, with public services such as water drainage, power, communications, roads, county government, medical clinic and schools with the possibility of more public services including a Central Park and a Plaza being added subsequently after construction. A total investment of about 110 million Yuan (\$17.2 million) with 72.65 acre of planned land use, and construction area of 17,254.24 sq meters has been planned for the Programme. Since November 2017 Broadband has been connected to the village. Yumai Township has 260 days of snow and rain and remains snow-bound for almost six months of the year. With snow covered narrow mountain roads, it takes more than 12 hours to cross Mount Relha followed by eight kilometers trek to reach the road head. Consequently the villagers had to resort to winter stocking of supplies for the season. With new roads having been built as part of the model village for ‘comfortable living’ projects, it is said that the village for the first time went without food shortages at the end of 2017<sup>14</sup>.

According to official figures, under the Comfortable Housing Policy, two million people—more than two-thirds of the entire population of the TAR—were moved into new houses or rebuilt their own houses between 2006 and 2012. Twenty percent of those rehoused between 2006 and 2010—about 280,000 people—had to be relocated, some nearby and others at a great distance. 180,000 more were expected to shift to their new houses by 2015<sup>15</sup>.

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12 ‘They Say We Should be Grateful’, Human Rights Watch, June 27, 2013, Under Part II, Origin of Rehousing and Relocation Policies available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan#> accessed on January 16, 2019.

13 *ibid*

14 ‘Building well-off border village in New Era’ China Tibet online, June 27, 2018, available at [http://eng.tibet.cn/eng/index/top/201806/t20180627\\_5991726.html](http://eng.tibet.cn/eng/index/top/201806/t20180627_5991726.html) accessed on January 13, 2018.

15 ‘They Say We Should Be Grateful’ Human Rights Watch, June 27, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan#> accessed on January 18, 2019.

## **Li Ascertains Progress of ‘New Socialist Countryside’ Firsthand**

During his tour of the TAR on July 25, Li visited one Shinga Village in Mailing Country in Nyingchi prefecture. It was a ‘Monpa’ village relocated from the impoverished areas of Metok Country, chosen to be shifted possibly because being deprived they would be complaint. He stepped into the house of a villager named Kungsang and is said to have enquired about the villager’s income, his children’s education and local healthcare services and was reportedly happy to hear that Kungsang’s family can make 150,000 Yuan a year and that relocation has helped lift villagers out of poverty in the high-altitude region<sup>16</sup>.

The visit of the Chinese Prime Minister to a relocated village underscores the importance China attaches to this project. Going by the statements<sup>17</sup> of Party officials like Jiang Jie, a member of the Standing Committee of District Party Committee and Standing Vice Chairman of the TAR who in December 2017, is reported to have stated ‘construction of the well-to-do townships and towns along the border with Tamar and the Tibet area will affect the development and stability of the border areas and will affect the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, border security and the consolidation of frontier defense’.

The hidden agenda behind the construction of ‘well off villages’ and ‘relocating villagers’ in the border areas is clear. Though the exact form, shape and timings as to how the Chinese intent will manifest itself can’t be predicted, the intention to create an advantageous environment in the border areas with India with an eye on Arunachal Pradesh cannot be refuted. Assuming that the construction of new dwellings was meant to improve the quality of life of the people in border areas, why relocate them? Why not allow villagers to live in the same area as before? Relocation of Villagers it appears is aimed at shifting problematic elements in the border areas to faraway places and to have only ‘safe’ Tibetans close to the Indian borders.

## **Surveillance and Control of Society**

China has introduced three major social organisations for control of the inhabitants in TAR since 2011. These organisations, ostensibly to improve the living standards has sent more than 20,000 officials and communist party cadres to Tibetan villages to undertake intrusive surveillance of people, carry out widespread political re-education, and establish partisan security units<sup>18</sup>.

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16 Hu Yongqi, ‘Li calls for safeguarding national, ethnic unity’ China Daily, July 28, 2018, available at <http://www.china-daily.com.cn/a/201807/28/WS5b5bab80a31031a351e90b03.html> accessed on January 18, 2019.

17 ‘TAR Official’s field trip to Border area in Lhoka’, December 21, 2017, Tibet Insight (December 15-31, 2017), Centre for China Analysis & Strategy, page 5 of 16, available at <https://www.ccasindia.org/Tibet-Insight-News-Report-15-30-Dec-2017.pdf> accessed on January 21, 2019.

18 ‘China: ‘Benefit the Masses’ Campaign Surveilling Tibetans’, Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/18/china-benefit-masses-campaign-surveilling-tibetans> accessed on February 05, 2019.



These officials had been stationed in groups of four or more in each of the 5,451 villages in the TAR as part of the three-year drive. The campaign costs is said to be 1.48 billion Yuan (approximately US\$227 million) a year, more than 25% of the regional government's budget, with an additional 10 billion Yuan (approximately US\$1.5 billion) allocated for infrastructure construction in the villages<sup>19</sup>.

### **The Three Social Organisations**

Three social organisations have been conceptualised keeping in mind China's larger designs and as such they have been set up with a view to exercise strict control over the society. Of these, the first, a government campaign called 'Solidify the Foundations, Benefit the Masses' was launched on October 10, 2011. Second, an urban administrative network that carries out increased surveillance and monitoring known as the 'grid system' was introduced in 2012. Third, in November 2011, a system of information gathering known as the 'Nine Must Haves and the Six Ones' was instituted to monitor the monks and nuns in Tibetan Monasteries. The three systems are officially described as measures to promote 'Stability maintenance', a drive which was described by the TAR Party Secretary in March 2013 as "the number one priority exceeding all else"<sup>20</sup>. These organisations are described below.

#### **'Solidify the Foundations, Benefit the Masses'**

Under the drive, over 5,000 teams of officials and communist party cadres have been positioned in Tibetan villages. According to the instructions given to these teams, their first priority is to expand the role and size of the party in the Tibetan villages by setting up a new party committee and persuading "those who are good at getting rich" to become party members and village leaders, thus turning each village into a 'fortress' in the struggle against separatism. The other area of its focus is to 'maintain stability' by "carrying out activities against the Dalai clique" and by "strengthening the management and education of monks and nuns".

These teams, according to research carried out by 'Human Rights Watch' are categorising Tibetans based on their religious and political thinking and establishing institutions to monitor their behavior and opinions. The campaign aims to achieve 'the three non-occurrences', implying no protests or expression of dissent<sup>21</sup>. The 'Solidify the Foundations, Benefit the Masses' campaign was to last for

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19 Ibid.

20 'China: 'Benefit the Masses' Campaign Surveilling Tibetans', Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/18/china-benefit-masses-campaign-surveilling-tibetans> accessed on February 05, 2019.

21 'China: 'Benefit the Masses' Campaign Surveilling Tibetans', Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/18/china-benefit-masses-campaign-surveilling-tibetans> accessed on February 05, 2019.

three years. However in Dec 2014, it was extended indefinitely stating that the aim was to “consolidate and expand the excellent initial results<sup>22</sup>”.

### **The ‘Grid System’**

In January 2012, following instructions from China’s then-President Hu Jintao, the TAR government announced that it would implement the ‘grid system,’ an extension of security operations<sup>23</sup> to the grass-roots level. This was despite the already existing security arrangements and without any signs of threat to the State. The main purpose of this arrangement was to fight the ‘Dalai clique.’ Grid management was listed as the third of the ‘Ten Measures for the Maintenance of Stability’ that had to be achieved in Tibet. “In order to [achieve] the primary goal of stability management,” Tibet’s Party Secretary Chen Quanguo told Tibet officials, “We must implement the urban grid management system. The key elements are focusing on ... really implementing grid management in all cities and towns, putting a dragnet into place to maintain stability.<sup>24</sup>” On February 14, 2013, Yu Zhengsheng, a Politburo Standing Committee member of the Communist Party of China (CPC) reaffirmed that the system should be put into effect throughout the region to form ‘nets in the sky and traps on the ground,’ an indication that the system is primarily designed for surveillance and control<sup>25</sup>.

The new grid system<sup>26</sup> is a follow up of the nationwide ‘social stability maintenance’ policy drive that was introduced in Beijing to prevent protests and unrest that had erupted since 2007 and the massive crackdown on popular protests that had swept the plateau in 2008. The system adds a new layer below China’s formal administrative system, which consists of government offices at the national, provincial, prefectural, county, and township levels. Cities and towns in China are divided into sub-districts which are further divided into ‘neighborhoods,’ renamed ‘communities’ since 1999. These Communities are managed by semi-official ‘mass organizations’ known as ‘neighborhood committees’ or ‘residents’ committees<sup>27</sup>.

According to the system, each ‘community’ would be further divided into three or more grid units<sup>28</sup> each with a team consisting of a minimum of five administrative and security staff. In some Chinese cities, the grid units are as small as 5 to 10 households each with a ‘Grid Captain’ and a system of

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22 ‘22,000 Chinese cadres to breathe down on rural Tibetans’ necks in sixth year of surveillance campaign’ Tibetan Review, December 03, 2016, available at <http://www.tibetanreview.net/22000-chinese-cadres-to-breathe-down-on-rural-tibetans-necks-in-sixth-year-of-surveillance-campaign/> accessed on February 06, 2019.

23 ‘China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet’, Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet> accessed on February 05, 2019.

24 Ibid.

25 ‘China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet’, Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet> accessed on February 05, 2019.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

collective responsibility<sup>29</sup>. Most of the staffs in grid offices are not government employees but normal citizens, and in Tibet, many are Communist Party members. Grid offices in Lhasa appear to have been created by an arrangement known as '1+5+X'<sup>30</sup>, which suggests that each unit has a basic team of five staff members led by a party secretary, with links to police, military and other agencies.

The offices are designed to be part of an integrated establishment of the government, party and citizens' agencies. Collectively, they are meant to provide 'a mass prevention and control network to create stable units and a harmonious environment for residents of sub-districts and communities.' Grid units are structured to work in conjunction with grassroots cadres, sub-police stations, coordinators and managers of the floating population, public security personnel, and 24-hour patrols during major holidays. 676 new street side police-posts called 'Convenience Police Posts'<sup>31</sup> with hi-technology monitoring equipment have also been established throughout Tibet in 2012 as part of the stability maintenance drive. Earlier the lowest level of Police operation was at the sub-police station, at the same level as a sub-district or township but the new police posts created are at the village or lower levels. These posts are said to be the crucial element of the new grid system and are intended to facilitate coordination of information and operations between the security services and the semi-official grid units. The new system thus involves both uniformed police and non-uniformed staff having for the first time permanent offices at the level of the grid unit.

Based on the public notice displayed in the Peling area<sup>32</sup> of Lhasa since July 2012, the primary work of the grid offices, it appears is to establish 'Basic Grid Unit Information.' According to the notice, the office is required to identify the number of people and residences in their area, the number who require social services such as the elderly and the disabled, and the number who belong to 'Special Groups.' The 'Special Groups' are<sup>33</sup>: released prisoners, nuns and monks which includes those who are not residents in a monastery or nunnery and former monks and nuns who have been expelled from their institutions, drug addicts, 'returning people' possibly a reference to Tibetans who have returned from the exile community in India, people to monitor after the March 14, 2008 protests in Lhasa, members of the forbidden religious group 'Falun Gong', and other individuals who require special attention. These 'Special Groups' appear to be those personnel whose monitoring and control Beijing considers critical to its objective of stability maintenance in Tibet. Undoubtedly, information-collection and surveillance are the primary functions of the grid units.

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29 Gong Weibin, 'Six Errors in Contemporary Social Management', Study Times, October 15, 2012, posted by Dui Hua Foundation, reproduced by Human Rights Journal available at <https://www.duihuahrjournal.org/2012/11/party-paper-lists-six-errors-in-chinese.html> accessed on April 4, 2019.

30 'China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet', Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet> accessed on February 05, 2019.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 'China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet', Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet>

For TAR, 'six key tasks' in the 'social stability maintenance program'<sup>34</sup> seems have been spelt out. The tasks essentially sound like those usually assigned to 'Quick Reaction Teams' in a riot prone area. These include, establishing stability maintenance teams in each monastery and village to control 'critical areas', 'critical sectors' and 'key persons'; manage the 'floating population' and crowds; establish local street-side police-posts 'to ensure total coverage of the grid linking the urban and village levels'; get early warning of 'sudden incidents; effectively employ new communication technologies to improve capacity for pre-emption and prediction; and to strengthen the capacity for emergency response by improving the forecasting of unexpected incidents. The aim seems to be 'no protests' at any cost.

### **Increasing the Size and Reach of the Party in Tibet through 'Grid System'**

In the TAR, authorities have faced shortage of personnel to staff the newly created grass-roots administrative offices. Most government officials are reluctant to work at the village or grass-roots level as these posts lack status. Accordingly the authorities have turned to local-level party members along with ordinary citizens who are not part of the civil service for the task. Consequently, alongside the construction of the grid system, major effort to increase party membership has been going on. Official statistics indicate that the number of Party members in the TAR grew by 46.5 percent between 2006 and 2012 as compared to 14.6 percent in the whole of China<sup>35</sup>.

The increase in the number of local-level party members and party workers functioning at the grass-roots level offices in Tibet and their role in the parallel Red Armband Patrols, gives the party and the government exceptional access to information about individuals. These arrangements imply, social management especially security and surveillance being handled at the lowest levels of the society. These duties are often in the hands of ordinary civilians or party workers and not government employees or uniformed police, who under international human rights standards are obliged to uphold the law in a neutral manner. Incidentally, Red Armband Patrols were formed in towns and villages across Tibet in 2012. The patrols consist of local-level personnel from neighborhood committees and communities, grid unit staff, newly recruited party members from the local area, retired cadres living in the area and higher-level cadres sent as members of ad hoc 'work teams'.

These Patrols are also reported to be carrying out searches which are presented as home visits carried out for educational purposes, and party related propaganda work. In 2012, between April and August, the government carried out a large number of searches by uniformed policemen and volunteers and is said to have confiscated 80,000 items of publicity material according to local media reports<sup>36</sup>.

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34 'China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet', Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet>

35 'China: Alarming New Surveillance, Security in Tibet', Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2013, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet> accessed on February 05, 2019.

36 China Tibet News available at [http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2012-0/21/content\\_383671.htm](http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2012-0/21/content_383671.htm).

The nature of the items was not specified, but past experiences suggest that the term ‘items of publicity’ may probably refer to photographs or recordings of the Dalai Lama or other documents issued by exiles and their organisations.

Party membership in Tibet requires articulating antipathy to the concept of Tibetan autonomy, independence, or the Dalai Lama. It therefore appears that political criteria rather than violations of law may serve as the basis for surveillance, searches, or detentions.

### **‘Nine Must Haves’ and the ‘Six Ones’ – Concept for Control of Buddhist Monasteries, Monks and Nuns**

Following the widespread unrest in Tibetan areas in 2008, an ‘emergency response project’ was instituted by the United Front Work Department. Based on the findings of the research project a ‘Complete Long-Term Management Mechanism for Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries’ which includes the system for the control of monks and nuns has been evolved. The mechanism is said to be “critical for taking the initiative in the struggle against separatism,” aiming to “ensure that monks and nuns do not take part in activities of splitting up the motherland and disturbing social order<sup>37</sup>.”

As a follow up of this broad policy frame work, since November 2011, programmes called ‘Nine Must Haves’ and ‘The Six Ones’ have been implemented to further regulate and restrict the activities of monks and nuns. Under the ‘Nine Must Haves’ programme, apart from every Tibetan monastery, school, community centre, and household which is required to have (a) roads leading to the facilities; (b) a supply of water; (c) a source of electricity; (d) radio and television sets; (e) access to political movies; (f) a library; (g) copies of the CPC state-controlled newspapers, the People’s Daily and Tibet Daily, the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries are required to hang the (h) portraits of Chinese Communist leaders Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, representing four generations of Chinese communist leadership (now the portrait of Xi Jinping might have replaced the photograph of Hu Jintao), the (i) Chinese national flag and to (j) make available in the respective monasteries newspapers and television programmes produced and published by the Chinese government<sup>38</sup>.

Based on an ‘important memorandum’ on ‘mechanisms to build long-term stability in Tibet’ issued in late December 2011 by the Politburo Standing Committee Member Jia Qinglin, Minister of Public Security, Meng Jianzhu and other state leaders, on January 4, 2012, the Party Secretary of the TAR, Chen Quanguo, announced that government or party officials will be stationed in almost all

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37 ‘Religious Repression in Tibet: Special Report 2012’ Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy, Page 41, available at [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1007732/1930\\_1361275680\\_120759145-religious-repression-in-tibet-2012.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1007732/1930_1361275680_120759145-religious-repression-in-tibet-2012.pdf) accessed on April 07, 2019

38 UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, dated August 09, 2012, available at [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public - UA\\_Chine\\_09.08.12\\_\(8.2012\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public - UA_Chine_09.08.12_(8.2012).pdf) accessed on April 7, 2019.

monasteries permanently, and that in some cases they will have the senior rank and pay of a deputy director of a provincial-level government department<sup>39</sup>.

As per the earlier policy, all places of worship, including Tibetan monasteries, were administered by a structure called the 'Democratic Management Committee.' According to this policy the selection and nomination of committee members consisting of monks, though controlled by the Government and Party officials with rigid political restrictions imposed, were elected by their own community. However in the newly introduced system which has been implemented in the 1,787 monasteries that are allowed to operate in the TAR<sup>40</sup>, an unelected 'Management Committee' called 'Monastic Government work unit' consisting of up to 30 officials are stationed in every monastery depending on the size of the institution according to a February 15, 2012 article published in Global Times<sup>41</sup>. This committee will run the monasteries and will have authority over the previous Democratic Management Committee. They will now be responsible for rituals and other matters.

In the new system, apart from the party cadres housed within monasteries, various local government offices at each level will have day-to-day responsibility for directly managing different aspects of Tibetan monastic life. Twenty-four government organs, including the offices of public security, foreign affairs, and justice, are listed in the regulations issued in Aba (*Ngaba* in Tibetan) prefecture in 2009 as involved in managing local monasteries<sup>42</sup>. The question is with so many Government officials trying to manage the affairs of Monasteries, what say will the religious leaders and monks have in either the running of the institution or in related religious ceremonies, functions and other matters?

Two monasteries in the TAR, Tashilhunpo (*Zhashilunbuin* Chinese) in Shigatse (*Xigaze* in Chinese) and Champaling (*Qiangbaling* in Chinese) in Chamdo (*Changdu* in Chinese), the traditional seats of Panchan Lama and Phagpa-lha Gelek Namgyal (a leading lama), are however exempt from establishing the 'Monastic Government work unit' as required by the new policy and will be allowed to retain their 'Democratic Management Committees' as these monasteries are considered politically reliable<sup>43</sup>

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39 'China: Tibetan Monasteries Placed Under Direct Rule', Human Rights Watch, March 16, 2012, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/16/china-tibetan-monasteries-placed-under-direct-rule> accessed on April 7, 2019.

40 *ibid*

41 *Ibid*.

42 China: Tibetan Monasteries Placed under Direct Rule' Human Rights Watch, March 16, 2012, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/16/china-tibetan-monasteries-placed-under-direct-rule> accessed on April 06, 2019.

43 'China: Tibetan Monasteries Placed Under Direct Rule', Human Rights Watch, March 16, 2012, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/16/china-tibetan-monasteries-placed-under-direct-rule> accessed on April 7, 2019.



The case of Chinese takeover of 'Larung Gar', the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist institute and a monumental landmark of Tibetan culture, religion and history, and the home to anywhere between 10,000 and 40,000 residents, including monks, nuns, and visiting students illustrates China's paranoia over the role that religion can play in thwarting China's larger aim of assimilating TAR in its mainstream after illegally annexing the region. In June 2016, the Chinese government in Beijing issued an order that stated the site had become overcrowded and its population had to be reduced to a maximum of 5,000 by October 2017<sup>44</sup>. According to an English language translation of a document shared by Human Rights Watch, the Government was dividing the Center into two sections, an academy and a monastery separated by a wall<sup>45</sup>. The concern appears to be the large number of religious devotees living in an area concentrated becoming a threat and a challenge.

Six members of the Chinese Communist Party have been appointed to take control of the management of Tibet's Larung Gar Buddhist Institute. According to the announcement, issued on August 25, 2017, Dhakpa, Dhondup Tashi and Lokhang Pun, have been assigned to manage Larung Gar Buddhist Institute. A separate set of three CCP members, Dhargay Tashi Tsering, Sonam Choephel and Sonam Yangzom, will head the Larung Gar Monastery Management Committee<sup>46</sup>. An official document obtained by Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that 97 Communist Party cadres and lay officials, who are required to be atheist, will take over all management, finances, security, admissions, and choice of textbooks at the center. The center's administration was previously run by Tibetan monks and nuns selected by senior members of the monastery<sup>47</sup>.

### **Chinese handling of Buddhists in Ladakh**

Chinese handling of Buddhists in the strategically important Ladakh sandwiched between Chinese occupied Aksai Chen and Pakistan Occupied Gilgit-Baltistan has been different. Dri-ra Phug monastery, located in the Kailash Region (trans-boundary high mountain region in the Himalayas between China, India and Nepal), was forcibly taken over by the monks of the Karma Kagyu sect about 15 years back. According to the Drukpas, Chinese government-endorsed monks, from the Tibet-origin Karma Kagyu sect (one of the Tibetan Buddhism's wealthiest sects), have

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44 Steve Shaw, 'China Tears Down the Tibetan City in the Sky' The Diplomat, August 03, 2017, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/china-tears-down-the-tibetan-city-in-the-sky/> accessed on April 9, 2019.

45 'Chinese officials engaged in 'takeover' of Tibetan Buddhist monastery: Human Rights Watch', Reuters, January 25, 2018, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-religion-rights/chinese-officials-engaged-in-takeover-of-tibetan-buddhist-monastery-human-rights-watch-idUSKBN1FE0BV>

46 'China Appoints Communist Party Members to Take Control of Larung Gar' Free Tibet, August 25, 2017, available at <https://freetibet.org/news-media/na/china-appoints-communist-party-members-take-control-larung-gar> accessed on April 9, 2019.

47 Lion's Roar Staff, 'Chinese officials taking over administration of Tibetan Buddhist institute Larung Gar' Lion's Roar, January 26, 2018 available at <https://www.lionsroar.com/chinese-officials-taking-over-administration-of-tibetan-buddhist-institute-larung-gar/> accessed on April 9, 2019

been coming to Ladakh with cash and restoration skills to carry out refurbishment work of the monasteries. Under cover of restoration, ancient and priceless iconographies, paintings and sculptures have been modified, whitewashed, or removed and sold in the international black market and to keen Chinese buyers. Sometimes the Drukpa monasteries are given cash in the form of high-interest loans to restore their art. When unable to repay, they have been compelled to hand over their monasteries<sup>48</sup>.

In a statement issued on September 10, 2014, the Gyalwang Drukpa, head of the Drukpa Lineage, a branch of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism states<sup>49</sup>, “More than 15 years ago, Dri-ra Phug monastery, the seat of Gyalwa Gotsangpa who was the most illustrious disciple of the 1st Gyalwang Drukpa Tsangpa Gyare, was forcibly taken over by monks of the Karma Kagyu, saying that they were instructed to do so by His Holiness Karmapa Ugyen Thinley Dorjee. I did not believe then that His Holiness Karmapa Ugyen Thinley Dorjee would have given such an instruction because he was just a child at that time. Even today the name ‘His Holiness Karmapa Ugyen Thinley Dorjee’ is being used to forcibly take over and convert the Drukpa Lineage monasteries to the Karma Kagyu. Historic pictures, images and art of Drukpa Lineage Lamas are being defaced and removed by the Karma Kagyu in an attempt to rewrite history. Despite what I have been informed, I still do not believe that His Holiness Karmapa Ugyen Thinley Dorjee would give instructions to forcibly take over Drukpa Lineage monasteries and convert them to Karma Kagyu”. The force behind the takeover of monasteries is apparent.

### **Limiting the Influence of Dalai Lama**

With a view to dilute the influence of Dalai Lama amongst Tibetans, China went in to create a second religious power center. Accordingly, China abducted Gendun Choekyi Nyima who was appointed the 11th Panchen Lama by Dalai Lama in April 1995 and installed Gyaltzen (Chinese: Gyalcain) Norbu, as Panchen Lama in November 1995<sup>50</sup>.

Since then China has been creating important platforms to increase his visibility and for him to gain wider acceptance. Rigzin Wangmao<sup>51</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama’s daughter who was prevented from

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48 Sameer Patil, ‘China targets India’s Ladakh’, Gateway House, June 21, 2018, available at <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/china-targets-indias-ladakh/> accessed on April 16, 2019.

49 Gyalwang Drukpa, Hemis Monastery, Hemis, Ladakh, India, ‘On Forced Conversion of Drukpa Monasteries’ September, 10, 2014, available at <http://www.drukpa.org/news-updates/news-in-2014/359-on-forced-conversion-of-drukpa-monasteries> accessed on April 16, 2019, accessed on April 16, 2019.

50 Andrew Jacobs, ‘China’s Chosen Lama Visits Monastery Town’ The New York Times, August 11, 2011 available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/12/world/asia/12lama.html> accessed on April 28, 2019.

51 Kim Wall, ‘US Ambassador Locke on 3-day trip to Tibet, embassy confirms’, South China Morning Post, June 28, 2013 available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1270570/us-ambassador-locke-3-day-trip-tibet-embassy-confirms> accessed on April 28, 2019.

visiting Lhasa by the Communist Party's United Front Work Department for several years was for the first time in June 2013 permitted or was sponsored to visit the Jokhang Monastery accompanied by her mother hoping that she would be able to influence the people of Tibet to accept Beijing's choice of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

A White Paper on Tibet titled 'Democratic Reform in Tibet – Sixty Years On'<sup>52</sup> released by the State Council's Information Office ahead of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's exile from Lhasa though not making any mention of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, says that the central government had further institutionalised the reincarnation process of 'living Buddhas', enshrined in the 'Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism', a guideline published 12 years ago, implying that China intends to choose and nominate the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama however made a statement<sup>53</sup> on March 18, 2019, a day after Tibetans in the town of Dharamshala marked the anniversary of his escape from Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, that once he dies his incarnation could be found in India, where he has lived in exile for 60 years and warned that any other successor named by China would not be respected.

## **Mining**

China has been carrying out extensive mining operations across the Indian borders in Tibet where Chinese State geologists estimate that the value of gold, silver and other precious metals could be to the tune of US\$60 billion. Zheng Youye, a professor at the China University of Geosciences in Beijing and the lead scientist for a Beijing-funded northern Himalayan minerals survey, based on findings after a number of evidences unearthed in recent years believes that the value of minerals hidden under the ground in Shannan (Lhuntze) and the nearby areas could be as much as 370 billion Yuan (US\$58 billion)<sup>54</sup>.

According to a study conducted by Trilochan Singh, Director at the University-Industry Inter-Linkage Centre at the Arunachal University of Studies and a former government geologist, coal, oil and natural gas, dolomite, limestone, graphite, lead and zinc could be the other possible finds in Tibet, the extent and the value of which has not yet been estimated. 'Huayu Mining', a Chinese mining company listed in the Shanghai Stock Exchange operates most of the mines in Tibet. For the year 2017, the company has reported revenue of nearly 1 billion Yuan with profits up 60 percent from 2016 figures of 300

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52 Catherine Wong, 'Beijing 'signals shift' on Dalai Lama with new white paper on Tibet' South China Morning Post, March 28, 2019, available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3003552/beijing-signals-shift-dalai-lama-new-white-paper-tibet> accessed on April 28, 2019.

53 Reuters, 'Dalai Lama says possible his incarnation could be found in India', Hindustan Times, March 18, 2019, available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/dalai-lama-says-possible-his-incarnation-could-be-found-in-india/story-FIHjGSRJJGozuoYYcvfmJ.html> accessed on April 28, 2019.

54 Stephen Chen, 'How Chinese mining in the Himalayas may create a new military flashpoint with India', South China Morning Post, May 20, 2018 available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2146296/how-chinese-mining-himalayas-may-create-new-military-flashpoint> accessed on April 20, 2019.

million Yuan<sup>55</sup>. Norbusa Mine, the biggest Chromite producing mine in Tibet is located north of Lhuntze<sup>56</sup>. China has also developed three copper mines in Tibet. These are the Shetongman mine near Shigatse, Gyama mine east of Lhasa and the Yulong mine near Jomda. These mines also have exploitable concentrations of gold, silver and other valuable metals in addition to copper<sup>57</sup>.

Two main enterprises in China's development plan for Tibet are mining and tourism. China has a political interest in the development of these industries in Tibet and considers them as a major element of its plans to consolidate its control over Tibet through the economic development route. Raw materials from places like South America and Chile<sup>58</sup> are cheaper than from Tibet. The Chinese state-owned enterprises do not have the same political interests in promoting mining in Tibet as does the Chinese government. Accordingly, in order to incentivise them they have been exempted from environmental regulations and to ignore the voice disapproval of the Tibetan people. People familiar with the mining plan believe that the speed with which China is developing Lhunze, is part of its determined effort to regain full control of South Tibet, or Arunachal Pradesh. The move is similar to the happenings in the South China Sea where Beijing has asserted its claim to the contested waters by building artificial islands and militarising them.

When questioned about the large-scale mining operations in a mineral-rich Tibetan county adjacent to the border with Arunachal Pradesh, Lu Kang, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman told a media briefing in Beijing, "The area mentioned by the report totally belongs to China." Asked about a part of the report which said China is rapidly building infrastructure to turn the area into another South China Sea like scenario, Lu said, "I can tell you that China's position on the India-China boundary is consistent and clear cut. China never recognised the so called Arunachal Pradesh<sup>59</sup>".

### **Tourism in Border Areas**

China has been developing and promoting Tourism in border villages. Some of Tibet's border villages like Tsona Country in Shannan City have been developed for Rural Tourism, the attraction being Tibet's moderately prosperous villages<sup>60</sup> in border areas.

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55 Ibid.

56 Zamlha Tempa Gyaltzen, 'China's Gold Mining in Tibet is a Strategic Move against India', Central Tibetan Administration, June 11, 2018 available at <https://tibet.net/2018/06/chinas-gold-mining-in-tibet-is-a-strategic-move-against-india/> accessed on April 20, 2019.

57 Warren Smith, 'China's Exploitation of Tibet's Mineral Resources' pp 13/15, available at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/warrensmithbooks/Warren1.pdf> accessed on April 20, 2019.

58 Warren Smith, 'China's Exploitation of Tibet's Mineral Resources', Radio Free Asia, page 7, available at <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/warrensmithbooks/2CMRFINAL.pdf> accessed on May 22, 2019.

59 PTI, 'China says gold mine operation in Tibetan county close to Arunachal is its sovereign right' The Economic Times, May 21, 2018, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-says-gold-mine-operation-in-tibetan-county-close-to-arunachal-is-its-sovereign-right/articleshow/64256951.cms> accessed on April 20, 2019.

60 Tibet News, 'Tibet's border villages speed up development of rural tourism' TIBETOL.CN, March 23, 2018, available at <http://en.tibetol.cn/html/Photos/ES/2018/0323/933.html> accessed on April 16, 2019.

## **Tourism in Nagari (opposite Ladakh)**

In January, VTIBET.com reported that the Nagari prefecture received over 660,000 visitors in 2017. Statistics released by the Ngari Tourism Bureau website indicated that it was a 20 per cent growth compared to the previous year<sup>61</sup>. The Nagari Tourism Bureau refers to the Kailash Manasarovar area, the ruins of the former Guge Kingdom and the Tholing Clay Forest as the marvels of the Prefecture and states, “The tourism revenue totaled about 750 million Yuan, up by 10 per cent over the same period last year<sup>62</sup>.”

## **Tourism in Nyingchi**

Nyingchi, (opposite Arunachal Pradesh), a prefecture-level city opposite Arunachal Pradesh has also been developed into a place of tourist attraction. Sightseeing attractions in the Prefecture include the Namcha Barwa Peak, and the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon located in Medog County which attracts significant tourism and geo-scientific and biological study to the area. Nicknamed the ‘Switzerland of the East’, Lulang, a village near Nyingchi is a picturesque village situated at a height of 3,700 meters (12,100 feet) in a southeastern forested area of Tibet. The village is seen by authorities as a flagship project for its ambitious plans for Tibet’s tourism sector. With a presidential suite that costs US\$1000 a night, the luxury Artel Hotel built in the Village reflects Chinese plans for the autonomous region.<sup>63</sup>

It has been reported<sup>64</sup> that the number of tourists to Lhasa and Nyingchi surged by more than 50 percent between Feb 01 and April 30, 2018. The Potala Palace in Lhasa saw visitors more than double in February compared to the same month the previous year.

## **Growth of Tourism Industry in Tibet**

In 2017, Tibet’s tourism industry was anticipating to welcome more than 25 million domestic and foreign tourists and raise tourism revenue to over 37 billion Yuan. With the increase in the number of tourists, the industry expects to provide employment to 380 thousand people. According to Garma Tsenden, Deputy Secretary of Party committee and executive Vice-Director of TAR Tourism

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61 Ibid.

62 Claude Arpi, ‘Why India needs to keep a tab on the new silk road’, daily O, May 15, 2018 available at <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/tibet-silk-road-china-xi-jinping-narendra-modi-doklam-diplomacy/story/1/24137.html> accessed on April 18, 2019.

63 ‘China pushes tourism in Tibet, while critics fear impact on local culture’, The Straits Times, September 18, 2016 available at <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-pushes-tourism-in-tibet-while-critics-fear-impact-on-local-culture> accessed on April 18, 2019.

64 ‘China Focus: Tourism booming at World’s Third Pole’, Xinhuanet, September 09, 2018 available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/09/c\\_137456300.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/09/c_137456300.htm) accessed on April 18, 2019.

Development and Reform Commission<sup>65</sup>, during the year two 5A level scenic spots and more than ten 4A level scenic spots were projected to be developed.

Tibet received 31.025 million tourists from home and abroad in the first nine months of the year 2018, a year-on-year growth of 29.9 percent, according to data released by the Commission of Tourism Development of TAR<sup>66</sup>. Meanwhile, Tibet's total tourism revenue is said to have reached 44.94 billion Yuan (nearly 6.5 billion U.S. dollars) in the three quarters, up 29.8 percent year on year<sup>67</sup>. Data provided by official sources on the numbers of tourists visiting Tibet has however been disputed<sup>68</sup>.

### **Tourism Train**

TAR has recently launched a tourism train connecting Xigatse to Qinghai province's Xining and plans to start another one between its capital Lhasa and Shaanxi province's capital Xi'an next year said Wang Songping, Director of Tibet Tourism Development Commission. The tourism train that runs between Lhasa and Sigatse in Tibet along the ancient road received more than 1.4 million passengers from July 2017 to June 2018<sup>69</sup>.

### **Road Communication**

Length of rural roads in Tibet has increased from 53224 km in 2012 to 60214 km in 2018<sup>70</sup>. In 2018, projects to link 13 townships and more than 1,000 villages through cement roads were expected to be launched. TAR authorities hope to build and upgrade 4,500 km of rural roads to link all its townships and villages by the end of 2019. The Region invested 37.29 billion Yuan (about 5.5 billion U.S. dollars) in its rural road projects last year, including building and upgrading 13,000 km of rural roads. By the end of 2018, the region's rural roads totaled 68,863 km. A total of 34 townships and 533 villages gained access to asphalt or concrete roads. About 244,000 farmers and herdsmen were engaged in road construction in 2018, increasing their income by a total of 6.94 billion Yuan<sup>71</sup>.

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65 Ibid.

66 'Tibet received over 30 million tourists in first 9 months' Xinhuanet, November 08, 2018 available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/08/c\\_137592493.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/08/c_137592493.htm) accessed on May 2, 2019.

67 'Tibet received over 30 million tourists in first 9 months' Xinhuanet, November 08, 2018, available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/08/c\\_137592493.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/08/c_137592493.htm) accessed on April 18, 2019.

68 Tourist arrivals in Tibet not as impressive or scary as China's data suggest' Tibetan Review, October 09, 2016 available at <http://www.tibetanreview.net/tourist-arrivals-in-tibet-not-as-impressive-or-scary-as-chinas-data-suggest/> accessed on May 3, 2019.

69 Yang Feiyue, 'Tibet taps into ancient road to promote tourism' China Daily, August 02, 2018 available at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201808/02/WS5b62ab3ca3100d951b8c83e0.html> accessed on April 18, 2019.

70 'Highways to reach all townships in Tibet by 2020' Xinhuanet, March, 05, 2018, available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/05/c\\_137015967.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/05/c_137015967.htm) accessed on April 13, 2019.

71 'Tibet to link all villages by road in 2019' Xinhuanet, January 17, 2019, available at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/17/c\\_137751875\\_2.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/17/c_137751875_2.htm) accessed on April 15, 2019.



By 2020, highways are expected to reach all townships and administrative villages in TAR. Tibet occupies a key strategic position connecting China with India and some South Asian countries and regions along the route of the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). The total length of roads (including rural roads) in Tibet is expected to reach 89,000 km this year, up from 82,000 km in 2016. More highways are likely to be built in the border areas next year, which will support the implementation of the BRI<sup>72</sup>. Details of Regional Highways being developed close to Indian borders with military implications have been discussed later.

On July 12, 2018 a 409-km toll free expressway costing about \$5.8 billion linking Tibet's provincial capital Lhasa with Nyingchi, close to Arunachal Pradesh was opened. Both these places are tourist attractions. The expressway cuts Lhasa-Nyingchi travel time from eight to five hours with a speed limit of 80 km per hour. Heavy trucks are temporarily banned from using the Lhasa- Nyingchi expressway. However, expressways in Tibet are compatible for use by heavy military equipment thereby rendering induction of troops easier and faster<sup>73</sup>.

## **Railway**

After the Qinghai-Tibet Railway (QTR), Sichuan-Tibet Railway (STR) will be the second railway into TAR. The line will run from Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan Province, enter Tibet through Chamdo and pass through Nyingchi and Shannan prefectures before arriving in Lhasa. The total length is expected to be about 1700 km and will cost 250 billion Yuan. The line will be a major railway line in Western China connecting Tibet and the more developed Central and Eastern regions. The design speed is expected to be between 160 and 200 km per hour. On completion, the travel time by train from Chengdu to Lhasa will be reduced from 48 hours to about 13 hours<sup>74</sup>.

China has extended the QTR to Xigatse which was opened to public on August 15, 2014<sup>75</sup>. Xigatse is the Tibet's second biggest town. Tashilhunpo Monastery in Xigatse and the town are the traditional seats of the Panchen Lama, the second highest religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Xigatse prefecture borders India, Nepal and Bhutan. The railway line from Xigatse is expected to be further extended to Zhangmu (opposite Nepal) and Yadong (close to India's Nathula). The Lhasa- Nyingchi line is expected

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72 Hu Weija, 'Tibet's economic development due for more attention', Global Times, December 25, 2017, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1081999.shtml> accessed on April 15, 2019.

73 'China opens new highway in Tibet close to Arunachal Pradesh border', The Economic Times, July, 12, 2018, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-opens-new-highway-in-tibet-close-to-arunachal-pradesh-border/articleshow/60900726.cms> accessed on April 13, 2019.

74 Sichuan-Tibet Railway, Centre for China Analysis & Strategy, July 05, 2017 available at <https://ccasindia.org/tibat-insight-5.php?tid=916> accessed on April 15, 2019.

75 Cindy Xiao, 'Lhasa to Shigatse by Train: another option for travelers with a tight travel schedule' Tibet Vista, March 21, 2019, available at <https://www.tibettravel.org/tibet-train/lhasa-shigatse-train.html> accessed on April 23, 2019.

to be completed by 2021<sup>76</sup>. Nyingchi is opposite India's Arunachal Pradesh. The line to Nyingchi<sup>77</sup> is projected to be extended to Dali the Administrative capital of Nyingchi. Dali is in Yunnan Province and it is connected by rail to the Yunnan's capital Kunming via Guangdong. It is also connected to Chengdu via Guangdong and Xichang.

## **Airports**

On June 9, 2018, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the TAR government announced<sup>78</sup> that Tibet will soon have three new airports. A communiqué said, "Construction of three airports, all above the altitude of 3,900 meters, should begin in 2019." By law, these new airports will be for 'dual use', implying that they will have to be constructed to suit both the civilian and military standards. This will provide flexibility to PLA Air Force (PLAAF) in the employments of its air arm.

Of the three airports, one will be located in Lhuntse in Lhoka area (called Shannan in China), north of the Upper Subansiri and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The second will be between Tingri and Lhatse counties of Xigatse City, north of Zangmu, the border post with Nepal. The third airport will be at Purang near the trijunction Nepal-Tibet-India, north of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand (on the yatri's route to Mount Kailash). While Tingri airport is near the Nepali border, the other two (Lhuntse and Purang) are at a short distance from the Indian borders. These airports are in the high-altitude region and are expected to be completed by 2021, by which time there will be eight airports in the TAR region. These airports will be in addition to the three airports close to the Indian border in Xinjiang, namely, Kashgar, Hotan and Yarkand. Currently there are five operational airports in Tibet and these are, Lhasa Gonggar International Airport, Nyingchi Mainling Airport, Xigatse Peace Airport, Qamdo Bangda Airport and Ngari Gunsa Airport<sup>79</sup>.

In June 2017, Xinhua announced the construction of 10 new airports to be built in Xinjiang by 2020. Added to it, six older airports will also be renovated and expanded. Of these ten airports, one of the airports will be built in Yutian (also known as Keriya), a county of Hotan Prefecture

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76 Derek Wong, 'Why did China build Railway to Tibet ? A documentay on Building Qinghai-Tibet Railway', Tibet Vista, August 29, 2018, available at <https://www.tibettravel.org/qinghai-tibet-railway/history.html> accessed on April 23, 2019.

77 Shailnder Arya, 'Why did China build Railway to Tibet ? A documentay on Building Qinghai-Tibet Railway', Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, 2008, available at [https://idsa.in/jds/2\\_2\\_2008\\_TheTraintoLhasa\\_SArya](https://idsa.in/jds/2_2_2008_TheTraintoLhasa_SArya) accessed on April 23, 2019.

78 Claude Arpi, '3 new Tibet airports near border pose threat' The Asian Age, June 20, 2018, available at <https://www.asianage.com/opinion/oped/200618/3-new-tibet-airports-near-border-pose-threat.html> accessed on April 24, 2019.

79 Tibetdiscovery.com, 'Tibet Airports - Top 5 Airports in Tibet' available at <https://www.tibetdiscovery.com/flight-to-lhasa/tibet-airport/> accessed on April 15, 2019.

close to the disputed Aksai Chin. Considering the proximity of the airport's location to the Indian border, a new civil airport which can be put to military use will have implications for India's security. Keriya airport is designed to annually handle 1, 80,000 passengers and 400 tons of cargo; it will have a 3,200-meter runway, a 3,000-square-meter terminal building and cost 104 million US dollars, says Xinhua<sup>80</sup>.

### **Military Infrastructure**

On December 28, 2017, Chinese road building team consisting of both civilians and uniformed personnel entered one kilometer inside Indian territory in Tuting area of Arunachal Pradesh<sup>81</sup>. They returned when confronted by the Indian troops leaving behind road building equipment including excavators. They were said to have been involved in track alignment activities. Reports also indicate that road cutting is clearly visible from the right bank of Siang river at Gelling which is about 7-8 km by aerial distance from the site of the incident. According to sources, the track being constructed is about 12 feet wide<sup>82</sup>. This possibly is an unnamed Regional Highway in the making. This track emanates from Bome passing through Medog along Yarlung Zangbo (Called Brahmaputra in India) coming up close to Indian borders in Arunachal Pradesh opposite Tuting.

It may be recalled, the Doklam Standoff between the Indian Armed Forces and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China which took place between June 16 and August 28, 2017 was over Chinese construction of a road in Doklam near a trijunction border area, known as Donglang. On 16 June 2017 Chinese troops with construction vehicles and road-building equipment began extending an existing road southward in Doklam, towards the Bhutanese Army Camp near the Jampheri Ridge, a territory which is claimed by both China as well as Bhutan.

Isn't there a similarity between June 16, 2017 incident in Doklam and December 28, 2017 incident in Tuting area in Arunachal Pradesh? It is unusual for the Chinese to undertake road construction activity during the winter. Why this hurry in the case of Tuting? Was this done to create an opportunity to intrude with the hope that during the winter season India may not be active in the area and it will enable China to encroach deeper, expand and consolidate its position by the time summer approaches?

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80 Claude Arpi, 'China's "Tibet Recipe" in Xinjiang should put India on Alert' daily O. June 23, 2017, available at <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/china-tibet-xinjiang-uyghurs-belt-and-road-initiative-obor/story/1/17965.html> accessed on April 15, 2019.

China's 'Tibet recipe' in Xinjiang should put India on alert

81 'Chinese personnel enter one km inside Arunachal: Sources', Press Trust of India, January 03, 2018, available at [http://www.ptinews.com/news/9373206\\_Chinese-personnel-enter-one-km-inside-Arunachal--Sources](http://www.ptinews.com/news/9373206_Chinese-personnel-enter-one-km-inside-Arunachal--Sources) accessed on April 13, 2019.

82 Samudra Gipta Kashyap, Sushant Singh, 'Chinese road building team enters Arunachal Pradesh, India seizes equipment' The Indian Express, January 04, 2018, available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/indian-forces-army-foil-chinese-attempt-to-build-track-in-arunachal-doklam-5010552/> accessed on April 13, 2019.

It is significant that an enlarged Google Map shows Chinese Regional Highways coming right up to the Indian Borders as described in the subsequent paragraphs.

Regional Highway S-201 connecting Chinese National Highway G-318 at Ranwuzhen coming short of Walong in Arunachal Pradesh and taking a North Westerly turn at the river bend South of Xiachayuzhen along the river Gongrigabu Qu. Regional Highway S-202 connecting yet another Regional Highway S-306 on the Chinese side at Shannan (Lhokha in China) and coming South West of Cona (Same as Tsona) and thereafter branching off in two directions, one going opposite Zemithang and the other opposite Bum La in the Tawang Sector of Arunachal Pradesh. The road to Zemithang further sends out a branch to Taktsang Gompa midway between Zemithang and Bum La. These roads coming South towards India provides three ingress routes to Tawang. Regional Highway S-306 connects to Chinese National Highway G-318.

Regional Highway S-204 connecting Chinese National Highway G-318 at Xiagtse and coming up to Yadung located midway between Sikkim and Bhutan in the Chumbi Valley. S-307 coming from Dagaxiang along the G-318 also joins S-204 at Gyangze. For beginners, G-318 connects Shanghai to Chengdu and then goes right up to Zhangmu on the China-Nepal Border. From Lhasa to Zhangmu it is also called the 'Friendship Highway'. At the Sino-Nepal Friendship Bridge, it connects with the 115 km long Araniko Highway to Kathmandu.<sup>83</sup> Chinese National Highway G-318 has been extended up to Kodari in Nepal. Regional Highway S-207 connecting Chinese National Highway G-219 and coming up to Burang and extending up to Hilsa in Bhutan. China's National Highway G-219 connects Xinjiang Province with Tibet and comes up to Xigatse. This Highway passes through the disputed Aksai Chin and runs all along the Indian border and joins Chinese National Highway G-318. A track (Not clearly marked) extends from Nagari and connects to Demchok in the South Eastern Ladakh. This could well be yet another Regional Highway in the making.

It is understandable that China is constructing roads and tracks connecting Townships and Villages in Tibet to improve connectivity but what is the aim of constructing roads, tracks and alignments, linking its National Highways and major cities and extending them close to Indian borders? As a confidence building measure has the Government of India been informed before executing these projects?

### **Brief Backgrounder - Chinese Intrusions into Indian Territory**

China claims the whole of Arunachal Pradesh attracted by the treasure of minerals deposits discussed earlier. It has constructed Chinese National Highway G-219, connecting Xinjiang with Tibet through

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<sup>83</sup> Sonam Tenphel, 'Facts about the Friendship Highway from Lhasa to Kathmandu Overland', Tibet Vista, April 26, 2019 available at <https://www.tibettravel.org/tibet-and-nepal-tour/facts-about-sino-nepal-friendship-highway.html> accessed on July 20, 2019.

Aksai Chin immediately after annexing Tibet which China claims as its territory. By claiming India's Ladakh region in India's Western Sector, China is seeking contiguity of the Aksai Chin area with Gilgit-Baltistan, an Indian territory presently occupied by Pakistan through which China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes and the Shaksgam valley illegally ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963.

Two notable skirmishes between India and China referred to as Nathu La and the Chola incidents took place in Sikkim in 1967. The skirmish at Nathu La developed into a full scale battle lasting six days from September 11 to 16, 1967. The Chola incident started and ended on October 01, 1967. According to the Indian defence ministry, during these incidents 88 Indian Army personnel were killed and 163 wounded while China lost 340 soldiers and 450 were wounded.

In June 1986, an endeavour to encroach and surreptitiously grab territory in the Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh in an area which was the scene of the 1962 India-China war was attempted by China by constructing permanent structures including a helipad. The incident referred to as 'Sumdorong Chu confrontation'<sup>84</sup>, was foiled by India, by promptly mobilising troops to the scene of the incident. Chinese responded with a counter-build-up. The Indian External Affairs Minister's visit to China in May 1987 helped lowering tensions. Incidentally Sumdorong Chu is a small river flowing west-east into the Nyamjang Chu river in the Thagla triangle bounded by Bhutan in the West and the Thagla Ridge to the North. In this case too China denied any intrusion and stated that the Valley belonged to them. In a significant move, in December 1986, India declared Arunachal Pradesh which was a Union Territory, a full fledged state of the Indian Union.

Just prior to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's first visit to India in May 2013, China intruded 19 km inside Indian Territory<sup>85</sup> in the Daulat Beg Oldie area in Ladakh region from 15 April to 05 May 2013 and has stayed put there. It also encroached in the Depsang plains of Aksai Chin and Chagalagam area in Arunachal Pradesh. Replying to Indian protests, Chinese questioned the validity of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and went on to state, "The Chinese side has confined activities to within the Chinese border and never trespassed across the line."<sup>86</sup> This is a deliberate assertion of its rights over Indian territory. The irony is while India explains such intrusions as 'difference in perception' of the alignment of the LAC by China and India, probably for domestic consumption, China questions the authenticity of the LAC and asserts it is in its own territory and that it has never

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84 The Sumdorong Chu Incident, Bharat Rakshak, October 12, 2006, available at <https://www.bharat-rakshak.com/ARMY/history/siachen/286-Sumdorong-Incident.html> accessed on May 7, 2019.

85 'Chinese camp 19 km inside LAC: Defence Secy to House Panel' Indian Express, April 27, 2013, available at <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/chinese-camp-19-km-inside-lac-defence-secy-to-house-panel/1108380> accessed on May 2, 2019.

86 V Mahalingam, 'Daulat Beg Oldie Standoff: An Assessment' Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, May 22, 2013, available at [https://idsa.in/issuebrief/DaulatBegOldiestandoff\\_vmahalingam\\_220513](https://idsa.in/issuebrief/DaulatBegOldiestandoff_vmahalingam_220513) accessed on April 27, 2019.

encroached across the LAC. The question is if India is not sure and confident of its perception on the alignment of the LAC with which it has lived even before the arrival of the Chinese in the scene, why should the Chinese accept India's claims?

Chinese intrusions in Indian Territory<sup>87</sup> have been slowly extending over a period of time to new areas in the Western Theater which include Chumer, Pangong, Daulat Beg Oldie, and Depsang. According to media reports<sup>88</sup> in April, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which patrols the border with China, had told the government that 640 square km in Raki Nala in North-East Ladakh had been inaccessible to Indian troops because of a large incursion by the Chinese army. A similar report<sup>89</sup> is said to have been submitted by former foreign secretary and Chairman National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) Shyam Saran to the PMO on August 12, 2013. The NSAB, has however denied reporting any loss of territory. Several dozen Chinese soldiers had set up a remote camp 18-19 km inside Indian Territory at Daulat Beg Oldie. This is a typical Chinese modus operandi to make use of the opportunities offered by developing situations to intrude, occupy, gradually expand and perpetuate the hold on the intruded land to grab territory.

### **China's Strategy to keep the Border Issue Alive**

China has repeatedly asserted its territorial claims lest they are forgotten with the passing of time. Some of the actions which China undertook to keep reminding India of its territorial claims, to put India on the defensive and to simultaneously apply pressure on Indian leaders in parallel during important bilateral visits and meetings are as follows:-

- China's Ambassador Sun Yuxi on November 13, 2006 just a week before Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit (November 20 – 23, 2006) for the first time claimed the whole of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory<sup>90</sup>. Surprisingly, China which annexed Tibet in 1950 seems to have taken 56 long years to realise that Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Southern Tibet is part of its territory!! No wonder China refuses to exchange maps specifying its perception of the boundary between India and China.

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87 V Mahalingam, 'Chinese intrusion: What the defence minister said and what he did not' Times of India Blogs, September 10, 2013, available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/In-search-of-propriety/chinese-intrusion-what-the-defence-minister-said-and-what-he-did-not/> accessed on May 2, 2019.

88 [Sudhi Ranjan Sen](#), 'Defence Minister AK Antony denies reports of China occupying 640 km of Indian territory in April' NDTV, September 06, 2013 available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/defence-minister-ak-antony-denies-reports-of-china-occupying-640-km-of-indian-territory-in-april-533777> accessed on May 2, 2019.

89 Reported by Sudhi Ranjan Sen, Edited by Deepshikha Ghosh, 'Antony to clarify whether China occupied 640 sq km in Ladakh in April' NDTV, September 06, 2013 available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/antony-to-clarify-whether-china-occupied-640-sq-km-in-ladakh-in-april-533762> accessed on May 7, 2019.

90 'Arunachal Pradesh is our territory: Chinese envoy' Rediff.com, November 14, 2006, available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/on-president-xi-jinpings-day-one-in-india-over-1-000-chinese-troops-intrude-4-5-km-inside-ladakh-667395> accessed on April 28, 2019.



- Intrusions in Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO)<sup>91</sup> in the Ladakh region, Depsang plains of Aksai Chin and Chaglagam area in Arunachal Pradesh took place prior to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's first visit (19 to 21 May 2013) to India as already brought out.
- In June 2014 during the India's Vice President Hamid Ansari's visit<sup>92</sup> (June 26 to 30 June, 2014) China published a map showing the whole of Arunachal Pradesh and large parts of J & K as Chinese territory.
- China's state-owned television CCTV while reporting on India's Prime Minister Modi's<sup>93</sup> visit to Xi'an for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping displayed India's map without Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.
- During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit<sup>94</sup> (September 17 to 19, 2014) to India, over 1000 troops intruded 3 km inside India's Chumer area. During that period 40 personnel of the Chinese Army also encroached in the area of Demchok along the LOC and were camping out there.

China has protested every time an Indian leader visited Arunachal Pradesh which is under Indian rule to remind India and the world, of its claims on Arunachal Pradesh. China issued Staped visas instead of normal visas to Indian citizens from Jammu and Kashmir which finally ended after the issue was brought up before Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during his visit to India in December 2010. However Issue of Staped visas to Indians from Arunachal Pradesh continues. In 2009, China raised objections<sup>95</sup> to ADB's board of directors and member countries endorsing India Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for 2009-2012, which included an infrastructure project (Flood Management Project) in Arunachal Pradesh.

Ahead of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to India from December 15 to 17, 2010, China's state owned Xinhua and Global Times, the official mouthpieces of the ruling Chinese Communist

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91 Prabhaskar K Dutta, 'How India, China compromise: A look at how standoffs before Doklam were resolved' India Today, August 31, 2017, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/doklam-standoff-india-china-compromise-demchok-chumar-daulta-beg-oldi-1034861-2017-08-31> accessed on April 28, 2019.

92 The Sangai Express, 'China maps J and K as its territory : Should Modi ask Ansari to end Beijing trip?' June 29, 2014, available at <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=4..300614.jun14> accessed on April 28, 2019.

93 News 18, 'China's state run CCTV shows India's map without J&K and Arunachal Pradesh', May 15, 2015 available at <https://www.news18.com/news/india/chinas-state-run-cctv-shows-indias-map-without-jk-and-arunachal-pradesh-990682.html> accessed on April 28, 2019.

94 Nitin A Gokhale and Sudhi Ranjan Sen, 'On President Xi Jinping's Day One in India, Over 1,000 Chinese Troops Intrude 4-5 km Inside Ladakh', NDTV, September 18, 2014, available at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/on-president-xi-jinpings-day-one-in-india-over-1-000-chinese-troops-intrude-4-5-km-inside-ladakh-667395> accessed on April 28, 2019.

95 Anant Krishnan, 'Arunachal project "a mistake", ADB told China despite board's support', The Hindu, September 04, 2011 available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Arunachal-project-%E2%80%9Ca-mistake%E2%80%9D-ADB-told-China-despite-boards-support/article13582416.ece> accessed on May 5, 2019.

Party, described the Sino-Indian border as nearly 2,000 km long<sup>96</sup>. This new Chinese assessment of the length of its borders with India contradicts the Indian figure of 4056 km which includes the boundary/LAC with J&K and Gilgit-Baltistan, including the Shaksgam Valley which Pakistan has illegally ceded to China in 1963<sup>97</sup>. Beijing's declared length of its border with India obviously excludes J&K and Gilgit-Baltistan thus bringing China into the India-Pakistan dispute over J&K. With these portions excluded, China may deny that there is any dispute between China and India in the Western Sector and may refuse to discuss the issue as Shaksgam Valley and Aksai Chin are already secured under its control. The deceitful and unreliable nature of Chinese behaviour is clearly on display.

### **The Doklam Standoff and the Land Grab**

On 28 August 2017, India and China announced that they had agreed to pull their troops back from the face-off in Doklam. In Beijing, the foreign ministry spokeswoman said<sup>98</sup> that the Chinese forces on site have verified that the Indian troops had pulled out. She said that the Chinese troops would continue to patrol the area, to garrison it and to exercise "sovereign rights" implying that Chinese troop numbers may be reduced but not completely withdrawn. She however made no mention of Chinese road-building activities. Aren't these moves a prelude to permanently stationing military across the borders and developing military infrastructure in these areas?

An agency report from Beijing in October 2017 suggested that the Chinese troops were very much present near Doklam. China not only defended the presence of its troops in the area but reiterated its sovereignty over it. "The Donglang (Doklam) area has always belonged to China and has been under the effective jurisdiction of China," the Chinese Foreign Ministry told PTI in Beijing in response to questions about a report that the PLA is beefing up troops in the area<sup>99</sup>. Military satellites had indicated that two regiments of PLA Type 96 battle tanks, artillery and troops continued to remain on the Tibetan plateau near the town of Khambha Dzong, nearly 30 km north of the border. Chinese have established three incursion camps in western Bhutan almost seven kilometers deep and not far from

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96 'Sino-Indian border is only 2000 km long: Chinese media', Rediff.com, December 19, 2010, available at <https://www.rediff.com/news/report/sino-indian-border-is-only-2000-kms-long-chinese-media/20101219.htm> accessed on April 28, 2019.

97 Pakistan Defence, Kahonapyarhai, Lt Gen, 'Why did Pakistan give the Shaksgam Valley to China? What was India's reaction?' June 28, 2018, available at <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/why-did-pakistan-give-the-shaksgam-valley-to-china-what-was-indias-reaction.565519/> accessed on April 28, 2019.

98 Simon Denyer and Annie Gowen, 'India, China agree to pull back troops to resolve tense border dispute', The Washington Post, August 28, 2017 available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/india-withdraws-troops-from-disputed-himalayan-region-defusing-tension-with-china/2017/08/28/b92fddb6-8bc7-11e7-a2b0-e68cbf0b1f19\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8d72d5ef1eb8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/india-withdraws-troops-from-disputed-himalayan-region-defusing-tension-with-china/2017/08/28/b92fddb6-8bc7-11e7-a2b0-e68cbf0b1f19_story.html?utm_term=.8d72d5ef1eb8) accessed on May 1, 2019.

99 'PLA troops patrolling Doklam to exercise sovereignty: China' Economic Times, July 13, 2018 available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pla-troops-patrolling-doklam-to-exercise-sovereignty-china/article-show/60974831.cms?from=mdr> accessed on May 5, 2019.

where the Royal Bhutanese Army has its own camps<sup>100</sup>. Satellite images also indicate that Chinese have erected several permanent military posts, few helipads, and new trenches not very far from the face off site. About 1800 troops are said to be stationed in the Doklam area even in deep winter<sup>101</sup>. The incursion camp in Chumbi Valley and the road at Doklam appears to be a part of the PLA's larger plan to widen its presence and hold in the narrow Chumbi valley which is a threat to India's Security.

### **Agreements between India and China meant to keep Border Tensions under Control**

China and India have signed the following agreements over a period of time:-

- Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas – 1993<sup>102</sup>.
- Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas - 1996<sup>103</sup>.
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question - 2005<sup>104</sup>
- India-China Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs - 2012<sup>105</sup>.

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100 Sandeep Unnithan, 'Month after Doklam withdrawal, more Chinese troops on the plateau than ever before', India Today, September 30, 2017, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/from-india-today-magazine/story/19700101-doklam-standoff-china-india-bhutan-troop-withdrawal-1053987-2017-09-30> accessed on April 13, 2019.

101 Josy Joseph, 'What is the Doklam issue all about?' The Hindu, January 27, 2018, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/what-is-the-doklam-issue-all-about/article22536937.ece> accessed on April 13, 2019.

102 R. L. Bhatia Minister of State for External Affairs Republic of India and Tang Jiaxuan Vice-Foreign Minister People's Republic of China, 'Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas' September 7, 1993, available at [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CN%20IN\\_930907\\_Agreement%20on%20India-China%20Border%20Areas.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CN%20IN_930907_Agreement%20on%20India-China%20Border%20Areas.pdf) accessed on May 2, 2019.

103 Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, November 29, 1996, available at [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CN%20IN\\_961129\\_Agreement%20between%20China%20and%20India.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CN%20IN_961129_Agreement%20between%20China%20and%20India.pdf) accessed on May 2, 2019.

104 'Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question' Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, April 11, 2005, available at <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6534/Agreement+between+the+Government+of+the+Republic+of+India+and+the+Government+of+the+Peoples+Republic+of+China+on+the+Political+Parameters+and+Guiding+Principles+for+the+Settlement+of+the+IndiaChina+Boundary+Question> accessed on May 2, 2019.

105 India-China Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, January 17, 2012, available at <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/17963/IndiaChina+Agreement+on+the+Establishment+of+a+Working+Mechanism+for+Consultation+and+Coordination+on+IndiaChina+Border+Affairs> accessed on May 2, 2019.

- Border Defence Cooperation Agreement between India and China - 2013<sup>106</sup> .

### **Assessment of Chinese Actions in Tibet**

Chinese actions in Tibet across India's borders fall broadly into two categories, namely, measures adopted to create conditions favourable for assimilating Tibet along with the preparations for annexing claimed Indian Territory, and two, those meant to gain time in order to be able to complete the first while managing events without drawing the world's attention to Tibet and its independence.

China's purpose of shifting recalcitrant Tibetans in the border areas to places further away and replacing them with acquiescent ones was to make sure that the people in these areas do not hinder, carryout subversive activities or come in the way of its long term aim of occupation of Indian Territory claimed by it across the borders. With the induction of amenable populace in the borders, China hopes to minimise opposition to such moves by the local people on either side. Developing infrastructure, constructing model villages, providing facilities, better environment and improving their living conditions are the pretexts employed to relocate the people from the areas and environment to which they were used to without creating visible dissent and consequent protests. There is however no getting away from the fact that Chinese have improved the living conditions of those residing in remote underdeveloped high altitude and mountainous areas across the Indian borders.

Reports of China's top two leaders directly communicating with villagers close to Indian borders are significant. In the first instance, as brought out earlier, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang is said to have met a villager named Kungsang<sup>107</sup> in Shinga Village in Mailing Country in Nyingchi prefecture during his visit to Nyingchi on July 25, 2018 and enquired about him, his family and welfare. The second instance pertains to Chinese President Xi Jinping's letter<sup>108</sup> to two unknown Tibetan sisters Zhoigar and Yangzom from the village Yumai in Lhunze Country, close to Indian borders. These two sisters had reportedly written a letter to Xi during the 19th National Congress of the CPC to report their experiences in safeguarding the country's territory and introducing development and changes in their town, while pledging to make continuous efforts to protect the border. Xi is reported to have praised the family for safeguarding national territory for two consecutive generations, thanked those who made loyal contributions to safeguarding and strengthening the country's borders, and encouraged the herders to build their hometown into a beautiful one.

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106 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 'Border Defence Cooperation Agreement between India and China' available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=100178> accessed on May 2, 2019.

107 Hu Yongqi, 'Li calls for safeguarding national, ethnic unity' China Daily, July 28, 2018 available at <http://www.china-daily.com.cn/a/201807/28/WS5b5bab80a31031a351e90b03.html> accessed on April 20, 2019.

108 An Baijie, 'Xi praises Tibet sisters for strengthening border', China Daily, October 30, 2017, available at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/30/content\\_33874582.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-10/30/content_33874582.htm) accessed on May 7, 2019.

These staged interactions are intended to put on view the ownership of the people and the territory for generations besides the leadership's concern for the people of border areas necessitating relocation of villagers. China believes that these actions will integrate the population in the border region with the Chinese Society thus minimising opposition to Chinese rule. China expects that infrastructure development and mining activities close to Indian borders apart from developing the economy, infrastructure, employment opportunities and the well being of the people over a period of time will gradually increase the Han population in the area effecting a demographic change. Gradual outnumbering of the local population by migrant Chinese and increased tourists to the region would dilute the strength and mask the voice of the local population and in the process reduce the influence of Dalai Lama in the region.

These actions will consolidate China's hold in the area and will aid any diplomatic or military actions aimed at wresting control over Arunachal Pradesh. It also hopes that better living conditions and prosperity across the borders in Tibet would catch the attention and attract the Tibetans living in the Indian side of the border. In this context it is significant that an article in the China Daily said "Under India's illegal rule, the residents of Southern Tibet live difficult lives, face various kinds of discrimination, and look forward to returning to China<sup>109</sup>" The message is unambiguous.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang's visit to Tibet, opening of Tibet to tourism and the shift in its policy from a willingness to engage with the Dalai Lama to a policy of "a great leap to socialist system<sup>110</sup>" under Chinese Communist Party's rule are reflective of Beijing's confidence and conviction that they have been able to pacify the people of Tibet and the region is now manageable.

Taking into account India's limitations in terms of counter-offensive capability, infrastructure and limited transportation assets for switching forces from one sector to the other, China has constructed a number of widely separated Regional Highways from various points mostly from China's National Highway G-318 leading close to Indian borders indicating that China is keeping its options open for force occupation of territory claimed by it. China's National Highway G-318 and other Regional Highways constructed in the area are meant to maintain flexibility in the matter of induction and switching of forces and in providing logistic support to its forces that may be operating in Arunachal Pradesh or elsewhere in case China decides to adopt the hard option. Airports and the railways will enhance the speed and capacity for induction of troops and heavy equipment and to switch troops from one sector to the other faster. Increased number of dual purpose airports in Tibet and Xinjiang

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109 Centre for China Analysis & Strategy, The Tibet Insight News, available at <https://ccasindia.org/tibat-insight-2.php> accessed on April 20, 2019.

110 Catherine Wong, 'Beijing 'signals shift' on Dalai Lama with new white paper on Tibet', South China Morning Post, March 28, 2019, available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3003552/beijing-signals-shift-dalai-lama-new-white-paper-tibet> accessed on April 26, 2019.

will provide flexibility in the use of its air arm effectively in any military operation against India in Arunachal Pradesh or in the Western Theater.

China keeps the borders active through periodic intrusions without firing a shot on the one hand, and signs agreements on confidence building measures and border management on the other to keep in check the level of provocation and disquiet caused by its encroachments and border violations. It regularly protests every time an Indian leader visits Arunachal Pradesh. It Prolongs border discussions without even exchanging maps indicating its perception of the boundary, as a means to keep its options open to alter its demands which it did in the case of Arunachal Pradesh as brought out earlier. All these actions are part of China's Strategy to gain time to create conditions in Tibet conducive for the annexation of Indian held territories without alerting the world or drawing attention to Tibet and the issue of its independence.

China has made it clear that the political struggle against the Dalai Lama is central to the Beijing leadership's concerns and is working on it on a war footing<sup>111</sup>. China recognises the influence Nobel Laureate Dalai Lama wields internationally and in Tibet. The Present Dalai Lama's stance of seeking autonomy and his statements on Human Rights violations in Tibet doesn't suit China's long term aims. Accordingly, with a view to subdue his influence, as a first step, China embarked on instituting measures to bring Buddhist monasteries, Lamas and nuns under its control, who it felt were creating an image for Dalai Lama and were influencing Tibetans. Actions were also taken to search out publicity material including Dalai Lama's photographs in possession of the people and destroy them to slowly kill his memory from the people's mind. With an aging Dalai Lama, passage of time and the changing face of Tibet, the younger generations may well remain ignorant of the times gone by and over a period of time become indifferent and accept Chinese rule and their methods as a way of life. That possibly is the Chinese aim and the resultant strategy to shrink the influence of Dalai Lama.

China installed Gyaltzen Norbu, as the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama as a second religious power center to counter and slowly weaken the influence of Dalai Lama in Tibet by abducting Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the Dalai Lama's nominee for the position. Religious heads are not Government employees to be chosen by the Government. But the larger question is, isn't China supposedly a responsible power seeking to lead the world and bring about Chinese world order not required to answer someone as to where the abducted Panchan Lama is and if he is dead or alive? Why is the world silent over it? In a departure from its stance in a white paper released in 2009 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Dalai Lama's escape to India, where Beijing had stated that the "central government has opened and will

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111 'Chinese police circular urges public to report on loyalty to 'evil forces' of Dalai Lama', International Campaign for Tibet, February 13, 2018, available at <https://www.savetibet.org/chinese-police-circular-urges-public-to-report-on-loyalty-to-evil-forces-of-dalai-lama/> accessed on May 6, 2019.



always keep its door open for the 14th Dalai Lama to return to a patriotic stand<sup>112</sup>”, the White paper released in 2019 remained silent on engagement with the religious leader, reflecting Beijing’s belief that it has been able to trim down the influence of Dalai Lama to a considerable extent within Tibet.

Combined with the measures instituted for the Surveillance and Control of the Society in Tibet which will mask and nullify any visible influence of Dalai Lama amongst the local population, China believes installing the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of its choice who will be supportive of Chinese actions across the borders, apart from influencing the Tibetans will project to the world the acceptance of Chinese rule by the foremost religious institution of the Tibetan people and by implication the people. That would nullify internal as well as international opposition to China’s appropriation of Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh and other areas claimed by it and end the issue of Tibet’s autonomy and independence once and for all.

### **In Sum**

Having annexed Tibet by use of force in 1950, China finds itself morally not in a firm footing and hence lacks the confidence to hold and retain Tibet which it claims as its own territory. China suffers from a guilty conscious combined with a dishonest ambition to expand its territory. How else would anyone explain its actions to shift population in the border areas, the elaborate control and surveillance measures instituted in Tibet and its actions to control religious activities at such huge costs besides the frenzy it has shown in appointing the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of its choice?

China’s appropriation of Tibet set off international outrage and internal opposition. Any effort to take over territory claimed by it belonging to India while opposition to Chinese rule within Tibet in the form of protests and violence has not been effectively managed would have brought back international focus on Tibet’s independence. Patient as they are, China set out on a long term mission to calm Tibet as the first step by a combination of development and related activities, vigilance and control over the population and their religious activities and creating conducive settings in the border areas to influence the population on either side of the border. Since management of Tibet would require time, China deliberately delayed all border dispute settlement processes while keeping the issue alive and limiting their actions to a level that its actions do not invite international attention. It resorted to diplomatic action like signing agreements on confidence building measures and border management mechanisms to calm the level of provocation and disquiet created by its confrontational border intrusions. Simultaneously, China has been developing military related infrastructure in Tibet to keep its military option open for annexing Arunachal Pradesh and other areas by use of force.

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112 Catherine Wong, ‘Beijing ‘signals shift’ on Dalai Lama with new white paper on Tibet’ South China Morning Post, March 28, 2019, available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3003552/beijing-signals-shift-dalai-lama-new-white-paper-tibet> accessed on April 28, 2019.

Similarities in Chinese approach in South China Sea and opposite Indian borders are revealing. China never acts in haste. All its moves are planned and thought through for years. It fails to acknowledge differences in perception of the alignment of the border whenever it encroaches across the borders. When questioned about incursions, asserts that it has not intruded across the borders and is in its own territory. China, without firing a shot, annexes land through small tactical actions. When questioned about construction and development of infrastructure which has an effect on the country's security, says the territory belongs to them and they have the right to be there and construct infrastructure as they deem fit. Its actions are piecemeal which do not appear significant enough warranting any major retaliation or international concern and condemnation. These small actions over a period of time swell up to become a major strategic challenge.

Militarisation of an area and occupation of areas by troops are carried out stealthily and with speed, making use of opportunities offered by developing situations which cannot be altered easily or may require physical eviction. When confronted, its limited actions are brushed off as misunderstandings at ground level and advocates military to military confidence building measures as a remedy. Cites history to claim territory but refuses to categorically spell out its entitlement. Over a period of time enlarges the scope of its territorial claims.

In South China Sea, China gradually encroached, reclaimed land to an extent of at least 3200 acres, and undertook substantial construction activities on its dual-use outposts in the Spratly and Paracel Islands to create and transform seven reefs into military strongholds with a view to dominate the Sea. It is now militarily in a position to control movement in the South China Sea. It has refused to vacate the area by claiming them to be its own. As of now there are no options other than to accept Chinese claim over the artificial islands or evict them from the area by force. India should not fall into this methodology trap of China, hoping it will see reason some day. On the domestic front India has a lot to do in the form of infrastructure development and improving the living conditions of the people in the border areas.

Hao Xiaoguang, a researcher with the Institute of Geodesy and Geophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, Hubei and a senior government specialist in China-India disputes in South Tibet, says Beijing is likely to take the same approach to the Himalayas as it had to the South China Sea. As China's economic, geopolitical and military strength continues to increase, "it is only a matter of time before South Tibet returns to Chinese control", Hao said<sup>113</sup>.

China's approach to international relations has two distinct paths. While China wishes to promote 'win-win cooperation' with outside world to achieve its national interests on its own terms, when it

113 [Stephen Chen](#), 'How Chinese mining in the Himalayas may create a new military flashpoint with India' South China Morning Post, May 20, 2018 available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2146296/how-chinese-mining-himalayas-may-create-new-military-flashpoint> accessed on April 20, 2019.

comes to its territorial claims it insists China would draw a red line around its 'core national interests'<sup>114</sup>. China considers areas such as the South China Sea, Taiwan and Tibet as its core interests.

China has created new boundaries with India, Nepal and Bhutan which were nonexistent till China annexed Tibet in 1950. China's moves ought to have been contested then but it was not to be. Circumstances thus created forced India to shut its Indian Mission in Lhasa and open a consulate which in turn was closed after Chinese Invasion in 1962. India accepted China's sovereignty over Tibet through inept diplomacy and ill conceived political decisions. This needs to be reversed.

In as far as India is concerned Tibet is a core area. Any movement or positioning of Chinese troops in Tibet opposite India, infrastructure development and political instability in the region adversely affects India's security and territorial integrity. After annexing Tibet, China has opened up the China-Pakistan strategic axis which adds to India's threat. Added to it with the manufactured border dispute lingering on for nearly seven decades India spends large sums of money in maintaining a force structure, acquiring weapon systems, platforms and surveillance mechanisms compatible with China's military might and to meet China supported Pakistan threat. India cannot afford such military expenditure.

Chinese intentions are clear and unambiguous. No amount of talks or confidence building measures is likely to induce China into giving up its claims on Indian Territory. Make no mistake, China is an expansionist power. India needs to realise that China is preparing itself and the people of the border areas for force takeover of the territory claimed by it. India therefore will have to be prepared for the worst and build capacity to meet the challenge.

India is not alone in facing China's unethical threat to its territorial integrity. Chinese threats in South China Sea and Taiwan are similar. China cannot be allowed to unilaterally change the geography of a region to suits its ambitions, economy and power, as the chances are, a raising China may become uncontrollable and act unilaterally once power gets into its head. In a world which seeks rule of law and justice, lack of military strength cannot be the cause for the Tibetans to handover their land in a platter to a powerful China or accept being subordinated by a foreign power. The world needs to come together and if need be seek the services of the International Court of Justice to restore Tibet to its legitimate owners failing which the people of the world will lose faith in the International systems and structures created to ensure peace and justice and take law into their own hands.

*(The paper is the author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article/paper is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere, and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct).*

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114 OKI NAGAI and TSUYOSHI NAGASAWA, 'China cannot lose 'any inch' of territory, Xi tells Mattis' Nikkei Asian Review, June 28, 2018, available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-cannot-lose-any-inch-of-territory-Xi-tells-Mattis> accessed on April 29, 2019.

## **About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION**

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

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