

# Inside China

*April-June 2011*

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The African Safari: Understanding the Sino-Indian Competition in Africa  
*Baladas Ghoshal*

## SPECIAL REPORT

A Paradigm Shift?: Elections to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile 2011  
*Bhavna Singh*

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Resurrecting the Sino-Indian Defence Dialogue  
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Kung Fu Panda: American Invasion of Chinese Culture?  
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Li Na and China: Sports as Soft Power?  
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China-Vietnam Friction: The South China Sea Factor  
*Teshu Singh*

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The IPCS has an independent China Research Programme, assisted by the MAC Arthur foundation in its efforts towards building Regional Frameworks of Cooperation In Southern Asia.

It is aimed at achieving a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations and of contemporary political changes taking place inside China. It further aims to strengthen the knowledge base on China in India, and serves as a tool for informed and diverse political analyses by academia and policymakers.

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## Director's Note

*The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), has been working on various issues related to China. Though the primary emphasis has been so far on the Sino-Indian relations, the Institute is now planning to focus more on internal social, economic and political issues within China. With India and China likely to dominate the Asian security architecture and the global order, it is important for India to analyze what is happening inside China, with a view to forecast, where is China heading towards.*

*As a part of its research activities, the Institute is planning to establish a formal research programme on China and build capacity of young scholars working on different social, economic and political issues inside China. The primary objective now for the Institute is to build a pool of young researchers, who can be trained systematically over the next few years on various internal issues relating to China. Towards achieving this objective, the Institute is also planning to organize an annual conference on what is happening inside China. The first conference will be held in September, in collaboration with the India International Center. If the Institute is able to mobilize adequate funding resources, we would also like to publish an annual, based on the conference proceedings.*

*Besides research, IPCS is the only Institute at the global level to organize two track-II dialogues with China; the first one—a trilateral dialogue on nuclear issues, with China and Pakistan, and the second one—a regional dialogue on improving connectivity and border trade with China, Nepal and Bangladesh. Both these dialogues are ongoing; there have been four round of trilateral nuclear dialogue in the last couple of years, and three rounds of regional dialogue on connectivity and border trade. Reports of these two dialogues can be accessed from the IPCS website.*

*The Institute is hoping to establish a China Programme, and expand into a Center by 2015, with adequate emphasis on internal issues within China and external relations. Besides, the Institute is also sincerely hoping to continue with its trilateral and regional track-II dialogues with China and multiple issues.*

D. Suba Chandran

## The African Safari: Understanding the Sino-Indian Competition in Africa

**Baladas Ghoshal**

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Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to attend the second India-Africa forum summit and the initiatives he announced, is an attempt to secure an economic, cultural and strategic space in Africa to counter the ever-growing Chinese influence in the continent. China and India are now seriously competing with each other to engage resource rich Africa, thus giving a new dimension to South-South relations.

While India's trade with Africa's eastern and southern regions dates back to the days of the Silk Road, China's thrust into the area is rather recent, and is focused mostly in infrastructure. Africa's exports to China increased at an annual rate of 48 per cent between 2000 and 2005, which is two and a half times as fast as the rate of the region's export to the US and four times as fast as the rate of its export to the European Union (EU) over the same period. India and China have burgeoning middle classes with rising incomes and purchasing power, whose members are increasingly buying Africa's light manufactured products, household consumer goods and processed foods and using its back-office services, tourism facilities and telecommunications. It is significant to analyze where is this competition headed.

### I THE NATURE OF INDIAN AND CHINESE FOOTPRINT IN AFRICA

While the annual two-way trade between India and Africa has gone up nine fold from US\$ 5 billion to US\$ 46 billion over the last couple of years and is expected to reach US\$ 70 billion by 2015, this volume is only a third compared to Africa's export-import trade with China, exceeding US\$ 126.9 billion. Between 2003 and 2008, Chinese direct investment in Africa soared from about US\$ 500 million to nearly US\$ 10 billion. This is despite India's longstanding cultural and commercial ties with the Africa continent. In fact, even a decade ago, India had an edge over China in trade with Africa.

In a well-planned and executed strategy, China has been making its presence felt in all spheres of economic activity in the continent. State-run Chinese firms are building bridges, roads, telecom networks, airports, and generally boosting infrastructure all around in Africa in return for getting access to natural resources. China is now Africa's biggest trading partner, surpassing the US. More than a million Chinese workers are based there at

present, engaged in all sorts of projects all over the continent. As a result, the Chinese have earned the reputation of being "neo-colonists."

By contrast, the Indian presence in Africa is more subdued but substantial. Unlike China's aggressive economic strategy aimed at gaining access to Africa's oil, copper and other minerals to fire its engine of growth, New Delhi is more interested in long-term economic partnerships that are mutually beneficial and do not replicate colonial systems of exploitation of African wealth. Indian projects in Africa include more utilitarian and social development-oriented ones like rural electrification in Mozambique and Ethiopia, railways in Senegal and Mali, cement in Congo and computer training in Lesotho. Indian companies are involved in building the National Assembly in Ghana and military barracks in Sierra Leone.

Even private corporate groups of India have had long-standing ties with African countries. Indian private investment in Africa is already at US\$ 5 billion, led by the Tatas, who command both respect and recognition with a presence in 14 countries in areas such as hotels, telecommunications, hydropower and transportation. Tata launched its African operations in 1977 from Zambia, where Tata trucks and buses begun to be seen everywhere, so much so that 'Tata' has today become synonymous with 'bus' in that country.

Other players include Vijay Mallya's UB Group, Mahindra and Mahindra, Kirloskar, Cipla, Dr Reddy's and Apollo Hospital, which has a facility in Dar-es-Salaam. India has been approached by the Botswana government to help in adding value to its diamonds by cutting and polishing them in Botswana itself rather than sending them to Surat or Antwerp. Indian pharmaceutical manufacturer Cipla has done a revolutionary service in supplying inexpensive generic anti-AIDS drugs to African countries in the teeth of opposition from Western multinational corporations.

Other Indian business groups have made major investments in Africa in the areas of information technology, hospitality, electrical equipment, and hospitals. Last year, the Essar group bought a refinery in Mombasa, Kenya. The company's earlier investment of US\$450 million in mobile telephony in that country has brought good returns; its brand 'Yu' has 400,000 subscribers now. After failing in its bid twice to clinch a merger

with South Africa's MTN, India's Sunil Mittal-owned Bharti acquired Zain Telecom's 15-country Africa operations for a total enterprise value of US\$10.7 billion, making it the sixth-largest telecom service provider in the world by number of subscribers. The combined entity will have 163.5 million subscribers of which 41.9 million are Zain Africa subscribers and 121.6 million are Airtel subscribers. Africa has become the new frontier for Indian companies to make their presence felt.

The Indian government is also financing an "enetwork" project to enhance internet connectivity in Africa, linking five regional universities, five specialty hospitals, 53 regular hospitals and 53 educational institutions across Africa to Indian universities and hospitals via a satellite and fibre-optic network. The brainchild of former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India has offered US\$100 million for the project for which 29 countries have already signed up. The first Centre for Indian Studies has already started operating from 2007 at the University of Witwatersrand or Wits in Johannesburg, Africa's premier educational institution, increasing academic engagement.

India's NIIT has grown to be one of the continent's biggest firms in information technology training, having taught 150,000 students across 55 centres. The Indian government has supported, in addition, technical exchange and training programmes in most African countries. For more than four decades now, 1,000 individuals from sub-Saharan countries have been provided technical training in India on a yearly basis. Besides, there are an estimated 15,000 students of African origin currently studying in Indian universities and educational institutions, many of them on government scholarships.

However, in setting up centers for intellectual engagement and extending influence through such ventures, the Chinese got ahead of India by establishing a Centre for Chinese Studies had opened in South Africa's Stellenbosch University as far back as 2005. By 2010, Beijing has already set up a two other Confucius Institutes in Rhodes and Cape Town Universities. Indian mining giant Vedanta Resources PLC runs Zambia's biggest copper mine. To attract Indian companies, Zambia offered in 2008 to set up a special, incentive-laden investment zone. The Chinese got their own investment zone in Zambia a year before India was offered one, when Chinese President Hu Jintao visited that country with great fanfare, announcing plans to build a new soccer stadium and pledging a whopping US\$800 million in copper mining investment.

China aggressively targeted resource-rich countries like Sudan (investment US\$ 15 billion), Angola (US\$ 4 billion) and Congo (US\$ 12 billion) with aid and easy loans in exchange for access to oil, copper and manganese. While China and other foreign mining companies generally export raw minerals from Africa, Zambia wants India to start processing raw materials there itself. This is despite the fact that China has had historically strong ties with Zambia dating back to the con-

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struction of the Tanzam railroad linking Tanzania and Zambia. Beijing's closeness to the Zambian government has not stopped it from accusing the Chinese business people of being insular and sometimes exploitative. The major strength of Chinese companies, mostly government-owned, doing business in Africa or elsewhere, is the support of the government and the full might of the Chinese economy behind them. In comparison, the Indian companies are privately owned and do not have the government behind them to underwrite their operations. The Chinese have deep pockets and have the ability to undercut and win every contract – and not just against India, but against the US and Europe too.

The strength of Indian companies lies in its diversified operations and its tradition of private sector creativity. An instance is the case of Sai Ramakrishna Karaturi, head of the Bangalore based Karaturi Global Ltd., who has been able to get 3,00,000 hectares (about 741,000 acres) of land in Ethiopia on a no-rent basis for the first six years for farming purposes. The land is expected to yield US\$ 100 million annual profit from export of food crops like corn, rice and palm oil. The company hopes to provide jobs to 20,000 people and intends to build a hospital, a cinema, a school and a day-care centre for its employees. If this experiment proves successful, it could be replicated in other places and could emerge as a good model for cultivating friends and influence in African nations.

While the Chinese operate in enclaves, India has a deeper infiltration into the macroeconomic fabric of the African continent. Africa wants India to be "a shareholder, not just a stakeholder" in Africa's development, to quote Ethiopia's deputy trade minister Tadesse Haile. Although African leaders find it difficult to resist the price China offers for their resources, these deals turn out to be costly from a long-term perspective. For example, they are often handed down infrastructure like the railways which they cannot operate on their own because locals have not been trained. Cheaper Chinese products often pushed Africa's own products out of the market. China's method of bribing leaders with millions for getting resources and projects is undermining Africa's painstaking efforts in recent years to evolve a more accountable leadership.

China is also accused of propping up dictatorships and other repressive regimes with direct military aid and favours. At times, the Chinese do not keep their commitments. For instance, in the Congo valley, Chinese

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state-run enterprises reneged on significant deals to source copper from the mines in Kantago district after their prices fell, generating considerable ill-will and wariness towards China across Africa. Already, China's growing presence in Zambia has met with internal resistance. Trade unions have protested against China's policy of 'dumping' cheap goods. Congo reportedly recently expelled 600 Chinese nationals and shut down three firms.

However, according to a recent article in Yale Global online by Professors Sautman and Yan, China's role in Africa has been much maligned. Though China mainly imports oil and other resources from the continent, the

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country has helped to finance infrastructure projects based on loans with lower interest rates than most European countries offer. Such projects are less likely to fuel corruption too, as they are built by Chinese firms backed by Beijing.

Moreover, low cost Chinese goods that many argue are displacing locally manufactured products are actually shutting out developed country goods. “The facts on the ground show China's engagement in Africa has been more positive than this discourse claims,” asserts Sautman and Yan. “The Chinese are getting bad press in the West because they are from a country that is neither liberal democratic nor white, yet are effectively competing with those who are – to the point that some Africans see Chinese development activities as providing a model.” They do admit that China also had its fair share of black spots: Chinese-controlled mines have conditions no better than European ones, for instance. But they feel that most analyses on China's involvement in Africa miss an important point – that of improving the lot of the poorest continent in the world.

However, Africans seem to prefer the Indian model of cooperation, which brings more appropriate technologies and managerial skills for African conditions. India's low cost adaptable technologies, which produce things like cheaper water filters or chlorine tablets or affordable HIV drugs, are thus attractive to the Africans. One of the disadvantages that Indian companies face is that, unlike Chinese companies who can afford to take risks in their ventures because of government backing, they are often haunted by the mass expulsion from Uganda in 1972 and worry about the potential for another such backlash.

The most problematic area of competition with China is

oil. India imports 70 per cent of its oil, and is heavily dependent on Nigeria. The government owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (Videsh) Limited has invested US\$720 million in Sudan to secure a share in their oil fields, and plans to spend US\$200 million on a 741 kilometer pipeline. India has offered US\$500 million in credit to countries around the Gulf of Guinea – the source of 70 per cent of India's African oil production. China takes over 60 per cent of Sudan's oil exports that is over 500,000 barrels per day – now 10 per cent of China's oil imports – and some 35 per cent of the flow from Angola. It owns 40 per cent of the Sudanese oil sector and one of its State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) built a 1,600 km oil pipeline to the coast in less than 12 months. India already imports 11 per cent of its oil from Nigeria and wants access to alternative reserves in Angola, sub-Saharan Africa's largest producer. However, it faces fierce competition from Chinese interests, which have already poured in investments worth US\$ 15 billion into Angola.

## II NEW DELHI'S EFFORTS IN AFRICA: A CRITIQUE

To boost trade ties, India convened in an Indo-African summit in Delhi in April 2008 with representatives from 14 African nations to act as facilitators for Indian businesses expansion in Africa. During the past seven years, India has extended credit worth more than US\$2 billion to African countries. At the summit, India promised to grant preferential market access for exports from all least developed countries, 34 of which are in Africa. Besides a promise to increase its lines of credit to Africa to the amount of US\$5.4 billion and its aid to US\$500 million over the next five years, India also announced duty-free imports from the poorest African countries and an action plan covering defence training, mining, energy and cultural links. It was also agreed to scrap the tariffs on a host of African imports, from diamonds and copper ore to sugar cane and clothes. The abolition of duties will cover 94 per cent of the inbound goods from 34 African nations.

The summit was India's riposte to the China-Africa Cooperation Forum of 2006, at which China unveiled US\$9 billion in preferential loans, export credits and other incentives to reinforce its grip on Africa's mineral-rich regions. A further boost to India's African initiative has been given in the second Africa-India Forum summit in Addis Ababa, the first to be held overseas, in May this year. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has pledged US\$ 5bn for the continent's development over the next three years.

This credit would be apart from US\$700 million pledged for new institutions in Africa. “Spreading out the Indian presence from agriculture to infotech to diamond cutting, tele-medicine to a virtual university, India now rivals China for top honours in the new Great Game in Africa,” reported Times of India on 25 May. At the summit Singh declared: “There is a new eco-

conomic growth story emerging from Africa. Africa possesses all the prerequisites to become a major growth pole of the world. . . The India-Africa partnership is unique and owes its origins to history and our common struggle against colonialism, apartheid, poverty, disease, illiteracy and hunger. . . . India will work with Africa to realize its vast potential.”

India also announced an Ethiopia-Djibouti railway line at a cost of US\$ 300 million. The initial plan by the African Union was for a line running across the breadth of Africa, but the task of coordinating land acquisition through so many sovereign states was a challenge that it was not willing to take just yet. India’s interests in Africa are not very different from those of China, with the added lure of 53 votes (Africa) pushing for a reform of the UN Security Council, where India aspires to be a permanent member. The Indian Government is also trying to eliminate Western middlemen wherever possible and proposes reshaping the global trade in diamonds by importing unpolished stones directly from Africa, the source of 70 per cent of the world’s Diamonds. During the past seven years, India has extended credit worth more than US\$2 billion to African countries. At the summit, India promised to grant preferential market access for exports from all least developed countries, 34 of which are in Africa. Besides a promise to increase its

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The Indian Government is also trying to eliminate Western middlemen wherever possible and proposes reshaping the global trade in diamonds by importing unpolished stones directly from Africa, the source of 70 per cent of the world’s gems, bypassing historical markets such as London, Tel Aviv and Antwerp. At present, 95 per cent of the world’s diamonds are cut and polished in India, but most pass through Europe on the way to the subcontinent.

### III CONCLUSIONS

Most of these initiatives from India should have come much earlier. Indian efforts are far too little compared to its capabilities, and far too late in reaping the dividends that it could have given its historical links and the goodwill it had earned from its shared fight against colonialism and apartheid. India had ignored its natural allies in Africa for a long time. At times, India has also demonstrated a condescending attitude towards Africa, which was seen as a backward continent. While that attitude is changing somewhat now and the Indian government is re-focusing on Africa, possibly as a reaction to the Chinese advance in the region and arising from an urgent need for energy resources to fuel its economic growth, India-Africa relations fall far short of its true potential. India’s thrust towards Africa is essentially private sector driven.

There is an urgent need for the Indian government, like the Chinese, to act as a bridge between Indian businesses and the governments in Africa. Africa is not only rich in both resources and votes in the UN General Assembly; it is also displaying robust economic dynamism. Many African countries are growing at more than 5 per cent. The oil rich ones are registering double digit growths. Africa is, therefore, immensely important for India for economic, diplomatic, and strategic reasons. The big foreign policy test for New Delhi is to evolve a policy that can reconcile the interests of the Indian companies who are eyeing Africa for profits and its own strategic goal of Africa as an ally that is supportive of its global objectives of reform in the existing international order. India must think out-of-the box as Sai Ramakrishna Karaturi did, to compete with China.

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## A Paradigm Shift?: Elections to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile 2011

**Bhavna Singh**

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While functioning democracies across the world face numerous challenges in building consensus and maintaining legitimacy, the Tibetan community in exile is an exceptional experiment in democratization of a de-territorialized community. For an entity which does not even fulfill the prerequisites of becoming a state,<sup>1</sup> it has remarkably managed to keep itself intact based on worldwide recognition of its charismatic leader, the Dalai Lama. Since its inception in April 1959, the Tibetan Government-in-exile (TGiE) has continued to work as the de facto government of an ‘independent Tibetan nation’ which for all practical purposes is not recognized by any country formally. It has provided a sense of identity and representation to not only the Tibetan community in exile but also to those six million Tibetans living inside Tibet.

In view of the unfolding political changes – the 14th Dalai Lama’s (Tenzin Gyatso) decision to relinquish political authority and the appointment of Lobsang Sangay as the new Kalon Tripa (Prime minister of the TGiE) – this study examines the likely trajectory of the Tibetan struggle in pursuit of identity survival. With Lobsang Sangay set to take the official oath and charge of the position of the Kalon Tripa of the 15th Tibetan Parliament administration at the beginning of August 2011, the paper also probes the future challenges for the new leadership and China’s reactions to these developments.<sup>2</sup>

### I POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN DE- TERRITORIALIZED SPACES

Contesting Chinese notions on Tibet, the TGiE was set up to provide a representative mechanism to the ungrounded citizens of Tibet after the Dalai Lama’s escape to India. From its embryonic stage almost fifty years back, the Tibetan movement has emerged as a successful case of activism from exile. It gathered sustenance from various countries over its period of growth which of course, harboured their own agendas to provide support. For instance, the CIA and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) helped publicize the cause of Tibetan resistance in the 1960s and 1980s respectively and India gave support under the rubric of protection of human rights. However, the movement achieved a self-built momentum, especially after the 1990s.

Some significant milestones during its progression have been the promulgation of the Draft Constitution for a

future of Tibet by the first Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies in 1963 and the establishment of the Charter for the Tibetans-in-exile drafted by the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (ATPD) in 1991. These developments have facilitated the instituting of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, with several ministries and the Kashag (Cabinet) under the stewardship of the Dalai Lama.

The main aim of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) of the Dalai Lama has been to provide for rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees and restoration of their happiness and well-being.<sup>3</sup> And being the foremost representative institution it continues to cater to the persisting stream of refugees filtering through the northern Himalayan ranges.

The TGiE is, however, not by any means either an elaborate bureaucratic or a massive infrastructural set up when compared to modern-day democracies. It comprises 46 members out of which 43 are elected and three are appointed by the Dalai Lama, overseeing seven ministries namely, Home, Education, Security, Finance, Health, Information and International Relations, and Religion and Culture. These are further supplemented by a supreme justice commission, an auditor’s office, and a public service commission to aid and abet the functioning of their infant democracy. The entire apparatus is constructed within a reach of three to four kilometers and the establishment operates with an annual budget of approximately Rs.913 million.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the political community is a close-knit unit where the same set of people engage in myriad tasks. But, at operational levels the government has very limited powers. Its security forces can make no arrests; its tax office faces constraints in levying taxes and enforcing payments. And most significantly, its foreign affairs department has failed to establish formal diplomatic relations with any country.<sup>5</sup> The current elections thus reflect an attempt to restructure their administration and overcome the shortcomings that have been observed since its inception.

*“From its embryonic stage almost fifty years back, the Tibetan movement has emerged as a successful case of activism from exile. It gathered sustenance from various countries over its period of growth.”*

The main reason for this restructuring of the political apparatus is that the Tibetan Charter does not allow a person to be re-elected beyond two successive terms as the Kalon Tripa and the current incumbent, Samdhong Rinponche has completed his two terms. Moreover, so far, the virtual authority of the Kalon Tripa has remained under the canopy of the spiritual guidance from Dalai Lama. However, this setup cannot be sustained any longer as he is getting old and so now there is a need to nurture younger leaders to carry forward the cause of Tibet. The 2011 elections therefore, mark a critical juncture in the Tibetans political history in terms of democratic maturity as well as their struggle for self-determination.

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## II

### THE ELECTION – KALON TRIPA AND THE KASHAG

A total of 40 regional chapters in six countries and three continents voted on 20 March 2011 with an almost 80,000 registered electorate (actual voting amounted to approx. 50,000 in the final round).<sup>6</sup> The Chinese authorities for their part continued to dismiss the elections as being hardly close to democracy and dubbed them only “skin deep.” The authorities claimed that the National Democratic Party of the Tibet (NDPT) was “only [a] political party of the Dalai clique” and therefore the elections were premeditated through an already selected list of candidates.<sup>7</sup> It is quite ironical for the Communist Party of China (CPC) to disparage the Tibetan elections when it conducts its own elections this way.

In a rebuttal to the Chinese claim, the TGiE pointed out that “those familiar with the rituals of electioneering in exile would also know about the conspicuous absence of public hustings and competing political parties that are the central characteristic of elections in democratic countries.” The incumbent Kalon Tripa, Samdhong Rinpoche defended the Tibetan polity as being “a partyless democracy.” Despite China’s cunning response and prophecies of the elections being doomed, the elections took place smoothly.

So, for the purpose of an objective analysis, one should remember that if China can boast of a democracy with Chinese characteristics, it is unwarranted to denigrate the Tibetan efforts as futile or superficial. While the primary focus of the elections was on the post of the

Prime Minister, the 15<sup>th</sup> Tibetan elections have brought a large number of younger members into Parliament.

**The KALON TRIPA (or Prime Minister):** The three candidates (Lobsang Sangay, Tenzin Tethong Namgyal and Tashi Wangdi) who emerged as prime contenders for the post of the Kalon Tripa after the preliminary round on 3 October 2010 came from similar backgrounds and espoused similar ideals for the future of Tibet.

The prime contender Lobsang Sangay, previously elected as the youngest executive member of the Tibetan Youth Congress (CENTREX) in 1992, gained prominence as an expert on international law, democratic constitutionalism, and conflict resolution.<sup>8</sup> Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, his primary opponent, a distinguished fellow at the Tibetan Studies Initiative, Stanford University was a founding member and President of the Dalai Lama Foundation and served as an advisor to the local Tibetan Community Center project. While Tashi Wangdi, another contender for the post, was a Representative of the Dalai Lama to Europe.

Thus, the most significant factor differentiating and influencing the mandate of common Tibetans was the candidate’s ability to convince them about their exceptional commitment to guide the people of Tibet in achieving their goal.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Lobsang Sangay emerged as the most preferred candidate primarily because of two reasons: first, given his expertise in international law, which he has acquired as a research fellow at the East Asian Legal Program at Harvard Law School and second, his entry into Tibetan politics at a much younger age as compared to others. It seemed more appropriate for the Tibetans to choose a younger leader who will continue to represent the Tibetan agenda internationally for a substantial length of time was more beneficial for a community as compared to training someone who might exit from the political scenario at a comparatively earlier time.<sup>10</sup>

Further on, many Tibetans were able to associate more with Sangay’s personal warmth, oratory, and strong leadership skills, believing him to be capable of bringing a clear vision that will be bold and vibrant enough to seize the interest and imagination of the youngsters within China.

There is also perhaps a tendency amongst the Tibetans to ape and compete with the Chinese political structure and since the Chinese Communist Party’s Politburo is largely becoming dominated by legal experts and technocrats, the Tibetans have raised a leader with a similar profile as their frontrunner. Another major reason for Sangay’s success is being attributed to his connections with the Chinese mainland; he has spoken in hundreds of seminars around the world and debated with renowned Chinese scholars and is well aware of contemporary Chinese politics and legal issues. He is seen as representing the Tibetans’ stand in China and his technology-savvy practices assist him in reaching out to

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local Tibetans. All these factors helped him in accomplishing a clear mandate with 27,051 votes, a 55 per cent majority.

*“There is also perhaps a tendency amongst the Tibetans to ape and compete with the Chinese political structure and since the Chinese Communist Party’s Politburo is largely becoming dominated by legal experts and technocrats, the Tibetans have raised a leader with a similar profile as their frontrunner. Another major reason for Sangay’s success is being attributed to his connections with the Chinese mainland; he has spoken in hundreds of seminars around the world and debated with renowned Chinese scholars and is well aware of contemporary Chinese politics and legal issues.”*

**The KASHAG (Cabinet)**– The elections to the council of ministers were devoid of the excitement surrounding the Kalon Tripa’s appointment and the Speaker’s election was to be delayed as late as end of May. Nonetheless, the cabinet of 15<sup>th</sup> Tibetan Parliament in exile boasts of an overwhelming number of promising candidates, especially from Dharamshala. The break-up of the representation amongst the various provinces and sects is as follows: U-Tsang, Do-toe and Do-med, the three traditional provinces of Tibet, elect 10 members each including two women members for each province, while the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the traditional Bon faith elect two members each. Three members are elected by Tibetans in the West: two from Europe and one from North America. In addition, the Dalai Lama has the discretion to nominate or not nominate one to three members.<sup>11</sup>

The government however, operates with a miniscule budget, which begs the question – where do these candidates get the money for their election expenses from? On interacting with some local Tibetans it came to light that many of the candidates make arrangements with the local business house especially food joints, which agree to provide both the money and the space for campaigning of the candidates in lieu of publicity for their brand.<sup>12</sup> Lobsang Wangyal estimated that the cost of posters and media coverage for Lobsang Sangay ranged from anywhere between Rs.10, 000-Rs.12, 000, which he said was modest and manageable. For those who are unable to get support locally, it is a matter of individual and personal investment and depends on their own capacity.

The TGIE however, relies on more formal means of support and substantiates most of its funds from the Privy Purse of the Dalai Lama by and large, which in turn is continuously refurbished by donations from abroad. This also raises the question of what kind of wealth sharing system might come into place when the

Dalai Lama hands over the reins of the Tibetan community in-exile to the new Kalon Tripa, since many of the activities in the Tibetan government often depend on the Dalai Lama’s private assistance.

### III THE 2011 ELECTION: A SYNOPTIC ASSESSMENT

A multitude of factors converge to make the 2011 election a transformative milestone in Tibetan history. First, the Dalai Lama announced about 10 days before the elections that he would be relinquishing all his political responsibilities and continue to guide the Tibetan’s only as a spiritual leader. The Dalai Lama had repeatedly argued for the need for political change previously and reiterated this in his statement in March 2011 saying, “the essence of a democratic system is the assumption of political responsibility by elected leaders for the popular good” and maintained that even the continuation of the Dalai Lama is for the people to decide.<sup>13</sup> He also insisted that the title of the present institution of the Gaden Phodrang<sup>14</sup> headed by the Dalai Lama be changed.<sup>15</sup> Given the fact that since the Fifth Dalai Lama’s founding of the Gaden Phodrang Government of Tibet in 1642, successive Dalai Lama’s had operated as both the spiritual and temporal leaders of Tibet; the Dalai Lama’s decision thus marks a formal end to the institution itself.

Second, in terms of the nature of power, the election symbolized the transfer of power from a charismatic leader to a legal-rational set up (contextualized within Weber’s theory of authority). The election also symbolized the recognition of the political maturity of the Tibetan community in general deriving from the 50 years of their existence in exile and marking 20 years of adoption of the charter. In sync with the Dalai Lama’s strong wish to introduce appropriate modern reforms in accordance with the changing times and an increased urgency due to his ascending age, the Draft Constitution for a future of Tibet (1963) and the Charter for the Tibetans-in-exile (1991) have been currently referred for amendment. Most Tibetans believe that the elections will augur a new era of reassertion of Tibetan identity through voicing grievances and staging protests. This

*“The election also symbolized the recognition of the political maturity of the Tibetan community in general deriving from the 50 years of their existence in exile and marking 20 years*

also suggested immense pressure on the nominees and the electorate in the run-up to the vote in deciding to assign huge responsibility on a single individual, on someone who was not born in Tibet (TAR).<sup>16</sup>

Third, even in terms of the methods employed to garner support, the elections marked a radical change. There was increased communication between the Tibetans in

TAR and those in exile through websites like the QQ (<http://www.qq.com/>). And the youngsters in exile seemed highly inspired by the internet revolutions in the other parts of the world that had been instigated by social networking portals like Facebook and Twitter. According to Lobsang Wangyal, a popular figure in the Tibetan community several Tibetans inside the TAR responded with great alacrity to the election procedure and made their opinions known through the medium of internet.<sup>17</sup>

Fourth, massive propaganda and image projection was elicited locally by the three contestants for the post of the Kalon Tripa. Posters with arguments and counter-arguments could be seen all over the streets and the sense of competition was fierce. All three candidates reached out to their audiences through internet communication which was a major achievement for them. Lobsang Wangyal also attested to the political calumny and negative campaigning that was resorted to from all the three sides given the fierce competition between the candidates.<sup>18</sup>

Fifth, the elections actually brought to fore the various

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succession issues in both the political and spiritual establishments. While the Tibetans celebrated the Losar (Tibetan New Year) on 5-6 March 2011 and anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising on 10 March, the election atmosphere remained clouded by various controversies such as the Karmapa scandal. This related to the recovery of huge amounts of currency from the Karmapa’s office.<sup>19</sup> The next section explores the views and expectations of the Tibetan Youth in exile and how they perceive this change.

#### IV

#### THE YOUTH: ACTIVE AND ASPIRING

The Tibetan youth community exhibits immense political activism through vibrant participation. Several organizations like the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and the Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA) have huge sections of young people who are as dedicated to the cause of the Tibetan identity as political leaders. However, in comparison to the glorified image projected by the political leadership, this huge section of young pioneers hold a much more pessimistic picture of the Tibetan future. They are divided into several groups with different aspirations and different concerns.

While one section remains highly disenchanted with the Dalai Lama’s ‘middle way approach,’ believing it has failed to bear significant fruit but continues to pay lip service to it, another section concentrates on day-to-day affairs. There is yet another totally apolitical stream in the population mostly comprised of monks who believe nothing but meditation to be their only ‘karma’ (responsibility). Tibetan youth meanwhile, makes increasing use of the media to air their grievances and there is a huge media-frenzy in the community given the need for creating awareness about the Tibetan issue. To this end, several cultural groups like the TIPA (Tibetan Academy of Performing Arts) and musicians are seeking to make their presence felt.

One of the prominent examples is the ‘JJI Exile brothers’, a Tibetan musical group which has taken to singing as a medium of expression of their grievances. The group has composed several songs in the Tibetan language to promote the dying use of their mother tongue and also in Hindi to express gratitude to their host country. The danger of losing their culture and identity was also mentioned by Tsering Youdon, who represents the Amdo prefecture in the Standing Committee of the Parliament. She stated that the Tibetan language is generally pursued in the Tibetan schools with English being introduced only from the sixth grade. And though there is a remarkable literacy rate of almost around 90 per cent amongst the Tibetans, there are no higher institutions/universities for the community. This becomes a substantial hurdle in preserving their language, identity and culture leading to its abysmal state.<sup>20</sup>

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Another issue of serious concern amongst the Tibetan youth is that despite the high level of literacy, most Tibetans are employed in very low-profile jobs like in the health care industry as nurses or in the education sector. They face a huge dilemma since employment requires the usage of English as a primary language which in turn means a compromise with Tibetan language propagation. Thus, the conservation of their language and culture is challenged by the needs of modern-day industries.

Among those who associate actively with the Tibetan political agendas allegorical references to Mahatma

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Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and the like are quite apparent. Most of the Tibetans associate their struggle with that of the Indian national struggle, the Irish struggle and similar experiences world over. Simultaneously, the radical faction is balanced out by a more mature group which while aspiring to gain independence for the motherland is inclined to non-violence when they realize the fact of China's growing economic might and how alienated they are internationally.<sup>21</sup>

There is also a substantial section of the community who voice their eagerness to work hand in hand with the Chinese people to develop mutual understanding about the situation of the Tibetans in exile, which they believe is a more pragmatic approach given the fact that they ultimately want to go back to the TAR. This stand however has led to a breach between the local Indians

*“Unmistakably, the youth is divided into several streams some of them verging on the brink of violent assertion, others utilizing a more soft-power approach, and yet others being politically insensitive to their surroundings. And in the similar vein, they have different expectations from the post-elections scenario.”*

mostly Kashmiris and Himachalis, who live in the eternal fear that such sections may turn out to be Chinese agents. Lack of proper knowledge and misinterpretation of facts might be the basis of such claims.

Unmistakably, the youth is divided into several streams some of them verging on the brink of violent assertion, others utilizing a more soft-power approach, and yet others being politically insensitive to their surroundings. And in the similar vein, they have different expectations from the post-elections scenario. On the one hand many believe that once the Dalai Lama has handed over the political reins he might actually be allowed to visit Tibet, but such a possibility seems rather bleak. On the other hand the Tibetan community expects the new leader to bring about substantive changes in the status of the Tibetan exiles by making the issue more and more prominent in the international arena and resorting to legal ways for this purpose.<sup>22</sup> A consensus is slowly emerging that the ultimate goal of the Tibetans would be to return to the motherland with the least amount of discomfiture for people on either side of the boundary once the human rights situation is taken care of.

## V

### FUTURE: REUNION OR REASSERTION?

While speculation abounds as to who will be the next Dalai Lama – whether it will be a male or female; or whether there will be a Dalai Lama at all – there is no definite answer within the Tibetan community. On the one hand, they are sure that China will try to re-enact the spectacle that was witnessed in the case of the

Panchen Lama, on the other hand they are scared about losing the cultural heritage that has been vested with the institution of the Dalai Lama. A prophecy made by the 13th Dalai Lama about the end of the institution has been conveniently ignored or rather deliberately kept in abeyance to avoid speculation and panic.<sup>23</sup> Another question troubling the Tibetan community is whether Lobsang Sangay will be able to maintain the momentum of Tibetan struggle built by the Dalai Lama on the basis of his charismatic appeal.

So far Tibetan exiles are basing their expectations on what unfolds in the Chinese territories in the near future. In an exercise in 2009, a group of China analysts developed three possible scenarios for China's future: Scenario I – “fragmentation of China” – where escalating social demands will chip away at the Communist Party's legitimacy; Scenario II – “China as a strong state” with the Party sustaining high economic growth all decade, and Scenario III – “China with partial democracy” where the party will retain great political power but only after opening up the political system because of its failure to meet rising economic expectations and to combat corruption.<sup>24</sup> In the case of both Scenario I and Scenario III, the Tibetans might be able to gain substantive leverage against the Chinese authorities. But if Scenario II remains the case, then any political bargaining might prove counterproductive.

China's obstinacy is evident in its immediate shift of verbal targeting from the Dalai Lama to the new Kalon Tripa. The Chinese government has often labeled the Dalai Lama as a *splittist*, made personal attacks on him and insisted that he cease all his separatist activities. Taking this into cognizance, the shift of authority from the Dalai Lama to the new Kalon Tripa was meant to keep such criticism at bay for the new individual and allowing him a free hand in operations. However, China was quick to reconfigure its center of attention and align its policy deviating from personal attack of the Dalai Lama to the leader of Tibetan affairs regardless of who or what he is. An article in the *People's Daily*, equated Lobsang Sangay to a “terrorist” for once serving as an executive member in the pro-independence group the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), even before the poll results were declared.<sup>25</sup>

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Lobsang Sangay observes that such attacks are “not helpful in creating a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue” and that it demoralizes the TGiE which has

been trying to engage China in nine rounds of talks since 2001.<sup>26</sup> He himself conceded that much of Tibet's future will depend on circumstantial developments<sup>27</sup> and thus that the Tibetans will have to adopt a wait and watch as well as prepare in the meantime. He further stated that he would adopt a track-II diplomacy approach to reach out to Chinese academics, businessmen, dissidents and lay people to help them develop a better understanding of the issue of Tibet and that this bottom-up strategy would help in influencing the Chinese government.<sup>28</sup>

One of the major challenges that Lobsang faces is convincing the Indian government to take a clear stand on the Tibet issue. Towards this end, he has made an appeal to the Indian government to make Tibet a 'core issue' in the talks between India and China.<sup>29</sup> The second

*“Despite the fact that China is facing consecutive defiance from different regions within its territory, no efforts have been made by the peoples in these regions to build networks/connect with the other movements for preservation of their culture and autonomy in China. This is either because not much thought has been given to the idea or because it is being avoided to differentiate the Tibetans' peaceful and non-violent struggle from the violent struggle of the Uyghurs, for example.”*

major challenge relates to his claim of making it possible for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet once in his lifetime by giving a positive shape to the deliberations between the two sides. The possibility of such an arrangement has been made worse by China's unchanged stance on Dalai Lama. Governor Padma Choling (TAR) told reporters at a briefing in Beijing that “the door is always open” for the Dalai Lama's return but only if he meets China's preconditions.<sup>30</sup>

Though one might argue that the spread of Buddhism in China demonstrates how despite lack of political progress, the Dalai Lama is winning the spiritual war against the Chinese, such an argument is rather unsubstantiated. Recent reports suggest that there is a heavy crackdown on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries when they are found to be indulging in activities which go against the interests of the state. The recent squelching of the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba area of northeastern Tibet validates China's intent of giving no clemency to religious or cultural institutions.

Despite the fact that China is facing consecutive defiance from different regions within its territory, no efforts have been made by the peoples in these regions to build networks/connect with the other movements for preservation of their culture and autonomy in China. This is either because not much thought has been given to the idea or because it is being avoided to differentiate

the Tibetans' peaceful and non-violent struggle from the violent struggle of the Uyghurs, for example. Though some informal empathy exists, most activists from these regions know each other through regular seminars and conferences held in and out of mainland China.<sup>31</sup> This in essence is the biggest challenge for the new Tibetan leadership – to maintain the non-violent nature of their struggle. Once the Tibetan youth resorts to arms, the struggle will reach its dead end through loss of international support as well by giving the Chinese a reason to clamp down on them with still greater violence.

In sum, Samdhong Rinpoche's reservations on conducting massive, visible electioneering in an exile situation have been steered in the background since the elections took place without any significant untoward incident from the Chinese side. The Dalai Lama continues to maintain that the Tibetan people's needs, as set out in the Memorandum, can be met within the framework and spirit of the Constitution and its principles on autonomy and that these proposals do not contravene or conflict with the 'three adherences' as stipulated by Beijing – the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; socialism with Chinese characteristics; and Regional National Autonomy system.<sup>32</sup> Amendments to the charter have begun with Lobsang Sangay set to take the oath on 14 August 2011. But whether or not the Dalai Lama's political successor will be able to pierce China's steel hardy framework on Tibet and squeeze out any tangible gains remains to be seen.

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Melvyn C. Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon, China Tibet and the Dalai Lama*, University of California Press, Oxford, 1997.

Tim Johnson, *Tragedy in Crimson: How the Dalai Lama Conquered the World but Lost the Battle with China*, Nation books, New York, 2011.

The author acknowledges the immense support and cooperation provided by the various interviewees and the other Tibetan expatriates for obliging the author's request to shed light on the current dynamics of Tibet and the Tibetan Government in-exile. Special thanks to **Tenzin Chokey**, General Secretary, Tibetan Youth Congress, who helped organize most of the interviews, **Tenzin Dhardon** (Media Officer, TWA), **Tenzin Tsundue** (poet and activist), **Penpa Tsering** (Organizational Secretary, TYC), **Lobsang Wangyal** (media activist) and to **Gyari Dolma**, Deputy Speaker of the TGIE for recommending members of the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament to interview. Thanks are also due to Dr. **Lobsang Sangay** who despite his busy schedule during the elections took out time to share his opinions. The author is also grateful to the **IPCS** for supporting this endeavor and to **Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli** for providing the leads amongst the Tibetan community.

#### ENDNOTES

## INSIDE CHINA

1. The Tibetan community in China is spread over a huge expanse of territory starting from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, to the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan within China. The great geographical spread provisioned for the extrapolation of a Greater Tibet theory in the earlier decades, however, the Chinese government has unremittingly refuted these claims. On a parallel scale, the Tibetan expatriates (numbering approximately 1, 45,000) are settled in various parts of India, Nepal and Bhutan as well as other parts of the world. Ancient Tibet is believed to have been constituted by three provinces which were known through the concept of Cholkha-sum and this idea continues to influence the Tibetan demand for recognition of greater Tibet. On the other hand, the only territory that the Chinese state recognizes as entirely Tibetan is the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

2. The study is based on a field trip from 17 to 22 March 2011 to Dharamshala, the seat of Tibetan Government in exile during the time of the polling for the TGIE elections and the follow up of the results thereafter.

3. Central Tibetan administration: Background, The official website of Central Tibetan Administration, Online URL: <http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=14>

4. Phurbu Thinley, 'Tibetan government tables budget for 2010/2011 in Parliament,' [www.phayul.com](http://www.phayul.com), 8 March 2010. Online URL: <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=26824&t=1>. The proposed budget has a total outlay of over 913 million rupees, against the predicted revenue of about 848 million rupees for the fiscal year. Out of the total budget proposed, about 28 per cent of it is allocated on increasing awareness of the issue of Tibet, 28.77 percent on welfare services, 17 percent on education, 11.29 percent on running cost of the administration, 8.70 per cent on health, 3.97 per cent on religion and culture and 2.28 per cent on others.

5. Tim Johnson, *Tragedy in Crimson: How the Dalai Lama Conquered the World but Lost the Battle with China*, Nation books, New York, 2011, p.127.

6. In India these constituencies included: Ladakh (J & K); Dharamshala, Bir, Dalhousie, Shimla, Poanta Sahib, Pandoh Tashiling, Puruwalla, Manali (H.P.), Delhi, Nainital, Clementown, Deekyiling, Herbertpur, Haridwar, Mussorie, Rajpur (Uttarakhand), Phuntsokling (Orissa), Bhandara (Maharashtra), Mainpat (Madhya Pradesh), Darjeeling, Kalimpong (West Bengal), Tenzin Gang, Miao, Tezu (Arunachal Pradesh), Shillong (Meghalaya), Gangtok, Ravangla (Sikkim), and Bylakuppe, Hunsur, Mundgod, Kollegal (Karnataka). Similarly, the Tibetan exiles in several constituencies in Nepal (Kathmandu, Pokhara Tashipalkhiel, Pokhara Tashiling), the US (New York and New Jersey, Minnesota), Canada (Ontario) and Europe (Switzerland, London) also surged forward to elect their representatives. A total of 11030 approx. people casted their votes in Dharamshala.

7. Dhondup Gyalpo, 'Chinese Slandering of the Tibetan elections,' *Tibetan Bulletin*, Vol. 14, Issue No.3. Online URL: <http://www.tibet.net/en/tibbulletin.php?bullart=1024&bullvolume=14&bullissue=3>

8. Profile of the candidates availed from the web, Kalon Tripa 2011: Change and Choice- A necessity, Home page, Online URL: [www.kalontripa.org](http://www.kalontripa.org)

9. Interview with Tenzin Dhardon, Research and Media Officer, Tibetan's Women Association, Office Building, McLeod-

ganj, Dharamshala, 18 March 2011.

10. Interview with Lobsang Wangyal, media activist and organizer of the Miss Tibet pageant, Tennor Restaurant, McLeodganj, Dharamshala, 19 March 2011.

11. For details on Election Commission see: Election Commission, About CTA, [www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net), Online URL: <http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=245>

12. In a conversation, Tenzin Tsundue, a renowned poet and activist in the Tibetan community shed light on the growing interdependence and negotiations between the popular cafes and their clientele for the purpose of fighting together for a common aim. This way the two (entrepreneurs and activists) mutually help each other in furthering their particular agendas.

13. Translated version of the Dalai Lama's letter addressed to the members of the Fourteenth Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies, dated 11 March 2011, procured from the main office of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

14. Gaden Phodrang means the Dalai Lama is the spiritual as well as temporal authority and the authority of the institution was informally devolved 10 years back with the election of the first head of the state Samdhong Rinponche as the Kalon Tripa.

15. In his statement the Dalai Lama stated, "My intention to devolve political authority derives neither from a wish to shirk responsibility nor because I am disheartened. On the contrary, I wish to devolve authority solely for the benefit of the Tibetan people in the long run. It is extremely important that we ensure the continuity of our exile Tibetan administration and our struggle until the issue of Tibet has been successfully resolved."

16. Interview with Tenzin Dhardon, Research and Media Officer, Tibetan's Women Association, McLeodganj, Dharamshala, 18 March 2011.

17. It is interesting to note that a call from Dharamshala to China costs merely Re.1 given the frequency of usage and very few instances of intercepting or espionage were cited by the localities during the course of interviews.

18. Interview with Lobsang Wangyal, Media activist and Organizer of the Miss Tibet pageant, Tennor Restaurant, McLeodganj, Dharamshala, 19 March 2011.

19. For detailed information please refer to the IPCS article-Pre-election flare-ups for the Tibetan community: allegations and rebuttal by Bhavna Singh, Article no. 3339, 4 March 2011.

20. Interview with Tsering Youdon, Member of the Standing Committee/Gangchen Kyishong, representing Amdo Prefecture, Dharamshala, 20 March 2011.

21. Interview with Tenzin Dhardon, Research and Media Officer, Tibetan's Women Association, McLeodganj, Dharamshala, 18 March 2011.

22. Interview with Tenzin Dhardon, Research and Media Officer, Tibetan's Women Association, McLeodganj, Dharamshala, 18 March 2011.

23. A slide in the Tibet Museum in McLeodganj, Dharamshala

talks of a prophecy by the 13th Dalai Lama who said before dying: “Very soon in this land (with a harmonious blend of religion and politics) deceptive acts may occur from without and within. At that time, if we do not dare to protect our territory, our spiritual personalities including the Victorious Father and Son (Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama) may be exterminated without trace, the property and authority of our Lakangs (residences of reincarnated lamas) and monks may be taken away. Moreover, our political system, developed by the Three Great Dharma Kings (Tri Songtsen Gampo, Tri Songdetsen and Tri Ralpachen) will vanish without anything remaining. The property of all people, high and low, will be seized and the people forced to become slaves. All living beings will have to endure endless days of suffering and will be stricken with fear. Such a time will come.”

24. Tim Johnson, op. cit, pp. 296-297.

25. Li Hongmei, Terrorist set to rule Tibetan Government-in-exile, 22 March 2011, people’s Daily Online, Online URL: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/96417/7326988.html>

26. Kalsang Rinchen, Tibetan PM elect asks India to include Tibet as “core issue” with China, 23 May 2011, Online URL: <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?article=Tibetan+PM+elect+asks+India+to+include+Tibet+as+%22core+issue%22+with+China&id=29569>

27. Interview with Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Nominee Candidate for Kalon Tripa, Mcleodganj, Dharamshala, 21 March 2011.

28. Interview with Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Nominee Candidate for Kalon Tripa, Mcleodganj, Dharamshala, 21 March 2011.

29. Kalsang Rinchen, Opcit.

30. That is, he must accept Tibet is an inalienable part of China and recognize Taiwan as a province of China. See ‘China: Stance on Dalai Lama same post retirement,’ 19 May 2011, [www.phayul.com](http://www.phayul.com). Online URL: <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?article=China%3a+Stance+on+Dalai+Lama+same+post+retirement&id=29559>

31. Interview with Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Nominee Candidate for Kalontripa, Mcleodganj, Dharamshala, 21 March 2011.

32. Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People, Tibetan Bulletin, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, 2010 Online URI: <http://www.tibet.net/en/tibbull.php?bullart=1009&bullvolume=14&bullissue=2>

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## BRICS Summit: A paradigm Shift

**Swaran Singh**

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This week, China is hosting two back-to-back summits of emerging economies which seem pregnant with implications that go far beyond eloquent speeches and photo-opportunities. On a closer look, they promise to provide one more definitive push to the world that now has talks of Bohao instead of Devos and sees the emerging G5 (called BRICS) replacing the overstretched G7 (industrialized countries).

This paradigm shift has begun thanks to the activism of emerging powers groupings like BRICS, IBSA and BASIC; which seek a greater share in redeeming the world from impending global crises like climate change and economic slowdown. Unlike other emerging powers' groups, BRICS is also expanding its membership. But more than adding new members like South Africa, BRICS is fast transforming this so-called 'economic club' into a far more political entity.

It was in 2001 that Goldman Sachs executive Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) to describe the group of countries that were emerging as the leading economic powerhouses of the 21st century. His analyses were based on the growth prospects of these economies. Jim's successive report of 2003 advanced the dates by when these BRIC economies would be overtaking several of the conventional post-industrial revolution sheriffs of the world, recasting the world economy and economic discourses.

The significance of this third summit in China this week lies in BRICS moving much beyond what Jim O'Neill had outlined. Even though it remains fundamentally an economic grouping, the entry of South Africa makes BRICS a global entity. There are a number of other countries like Mexico, Egypt, Turkey, Nigeria, Indonesia, Vietnam and South Korea who are far bigger and faster rising economies, and have expressed an interest in joining the BRIC. However, South Africa seems to better fit the bill as an audible voice from a continent with 54 countries. At the same time, South Africa promises to serve as an effective gateway for BRIC's trade and investments into these resource-rich African nations.

Jim O'Neill criticized South Africa's entry into BRIC last week on CNN, calling the country's influence on global economic trends too small to qualify as a member of his original BRIC paradigm. Instead, he prefers Nigeria. But the politics of Nigeria shadow both its economy as also its acceptability in the international community. Even in South Africa, there have been voices of dissent against the BRIC. African National

Congress Youth League leader Julius Malema last week called his country's entry into BRIC misplaced, making it vulnerable to external forces. This shows that the entry of South Africa into BRIC has more to it than economic credentials.

The fact that BRICS is fast evolving its own life and aspirations is sufficiently discernible today to stand scrutiny. This new BRICS need not necessarily fit into the original vision of Jim O'Neill. BRICS today is developing not only an economic but also a huge diplomatic footprint, grafting an influential political club over what had originated as a loose economic acronym, making tentative projections and masquerading as a paradigm.

The fact that the third summit is being hosted back-to-back with the Boao Forum will further facilitate BRICS' journey from economics to politics. It will allow BRICS leaders to rub shoulders with their contemporaries who will be attending the Boao Forum. Going by initial indications, BRICS leaders will be discussing not just economic issues of inclusive growth but also global political scenarios, including the western airstrikes to impose a UN-sanctioned 'No Fly Zone' on Libya. We may actually see a firm warning to western countries being issued in their closing statement.

There is already a realization that BRICS failed to coordinate their strategy at the UN Security Council's recent discussions on imposing a 'No Fly Zone' on Libya. This resulted in South Africa supporting the resolution while the other four abstained from voting. Russia, India and China have since continued with their campaign against the western bombing of Libya, insinuating an impending humanitarian crisis. Even Brazil issued a similar statement after President Obama's visit. South Africa has remained relatively mute on the subject but is likely to be co-opted into an evolving anti-West BRICS consensus on the subject.

What guarantees the success of BRICS' political incarnation is its strong economic fundamentals and policy coordination. At present, for instance, the BRICS account for quite over half of the world's foreign direct investments, annual economic growth, and nearly half of its global population. As a percentage share of the world's GDP, their combined GDP is expected to rise from 17 per cent of the world in 2010 to 47 per cent by 2030, if not earlier. An expansion of BRICS to include other members in their New Delhi summit next year promises to further reinforce this paradigm shift.

Commentaries**Political Democracy for Tibetans: China's Rising Dilemma****Srikanth Kondapalli***Professor, Center for Chinese Studies, JNU, New Delhi*

Although the Dalai Lama had indicated his decision to devolve the “formal authority to an elected (Tibetan) leader” on several occasions earlier, his statement on 10 March 2011 caught the Chinese leadership unawares. This statement came 10 days before the Tibetan émigré community went to polls to elect a new Prime Minister and other members to the Tibetan Parliament in-Exile. While the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswomen termed the offer as a “trick to deceive the international community”, this move by the Tibetan spiritual leader is likely to impact China in the near- and long-term for a number of reasons.

First, the offer to delegate power to the Tibetan elected representative will have far-reaching consequences on the Chinese political system. In the light of the current popular unrests in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and other countries, against the vestiges of authoritarianism, the Dalai Lama's move to give up executive powers in favour a popularly elected parliament could trigger similar demands on the Communist Party in China. The Chinese government has indicated that it will take this challenge head-on through extensive internal control mechanisms.

Previously, under President Jiang Zemin, the “three represents” strategy (that is, the party representing the broad masses, productive forces and advanced culture) was suggested to broad-base the party's hold over the country. China also experimented with elections at the village level to fasten up the process of reform, although the communist party representation is from the county-level upwards.

Second, by making a long-term and stable arrangement of institutional and popular accountability for the Tibetan authority in-exile, the Dalai Lama will knock off any chance of instability and chaos in a post-Dalai Lama situation. Given the apparent intentions of the Chinese authority to choose the next Dalai Lama, albeit through certain traditional practices, the current step by the Dalai Lama reduces the possibility of the next Dalai Lama exercising any sweeping powers accorded to him under the 1991 constitution.

This is also possibly in line with the lessons learnt from the succession issues hovering around the other two main sects of the Tibetan religion. Today, there are two contesting candidates for the post of the Panchem Lama (each recognized separately by the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government) and three candidates for the Karmapa Lama positions (although Dharamshala and Beijing separately recognized Urgyen Trinley Dorje as

the current Karmapa Lama). As the Dalai Lama's position in the Tibetan life is much more crucial, any carelessness in this regard could cost the Tibetan cause enormously. Hence the current move by the Dalai Lama can be seen as broad-basing the institution by handing over the political functions to an elected leader.

Third, in the recent period the Chinese leaders' verbal attacks on the Dalai Lama have increasingly become personal and the current move to delegate powers will help in shifting the attention of the Chinese authorities from the Dalai Lama. For instance, Zhang Qingli, the then Communist Party Secretary of Tibet went to the extent of calling the Dalai Lama in 2008 as a “wolf in a monk's robes”. Li Zhaoxing, former foreign minister and the current spokesman of foreign affairs of the National People's Congress lampooned the 6th Dalai Lama (who hailed from Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh) for indulging in worldly pleasures or the current Dalai Lama as a “political monk” in March 2010. The current decision thus might reposition the focus of the Chinese authorities and it is possible that the popularly elected leader may become the target of Chinese criticism. But the Chinese leaders maintain that the talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives are meant to discuss the personal future of the Dalai Lama and not to deliberate on governance in Tibet.

In such a scenario, these Chinese official criticism is bound to boomerang on China as similar caustic criticisms by highest public functionaries in the Chinese leadership including the then Premier Zhu Rongji indicated during the elections in Taiwan in 1995/96 and 2000. Moreover, the nine rounds of talks between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's representative have not yielded any positive results. In the US Embassy cables from Beijing, Wikileaks indicated, a majority of the Politburo members of the Communist Party wish to continue the hard line stance on the Tibetan unrest. For this purpose, the Chinese authorities have initiated political education campaigns to mould the Tibetan monks and have adopted “strike hard” policies of repression of dissent. These have resulted in more political alienation of Tibetans in Tibet and abroad which implies that the relations between the Tibetans and the Chinese are poised to remain difficult in the future.

## Resurrecting the Sino-Indian Defence Dialogue

**Bhartendu Kumar Singh**

*Indian Defence Accounts Service*

Sino-Indian relations have not been in the best of forms in recent times. While the two countries have enjoyed 'relative peace' on their Line of Actual Control (LAC), persistent cases of Chinese trespassing on the LAC and other irritants have led to increased skepticism on resolution of long standing problems. An instance of the fall out between the two countries is that the defence dialogue being put on hold since July 2010 when Beijing denied a proper stamped passport visa to a senior Indian Army Commander posted in Jammu and Kashmir. The resultant impasse led to difficulties for India to engage China in any form of military diplomacy. But is there a change now?

Indian Defence Minister recently announced that India and China will soon resume the defence dialogue, a proposition strengthened by concurrent feelers from Beijing. Accordingly, the two sides will meet for their fourth round of defence dialogue, resuming a confidence building process that was initiated in 2007. Apparently, the differences were over the procedures of issuing visa which Prime Minister Manmohan Singh highlighted this anomaly in his meetings with the Chinese leaders. Beijing has not issued a single 'stapled' visa to India's Jammu and Kashmir residents since Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's New Delhi visit last December.

The defence dialogue is just one component of the comprehensive military diplomacy institutionalized between the two countries over a period of time. While the sector commanders' meet on the LAC has kept pace, the joint military exercises (known as 'hand-in-hand exercises') are yet to get another lease of life. These exercises, even though limited to only 100 odd soldiers from both sides, have allowed the two militaries to bridge the knowledge gap about each other and their behavioural pattern. Reviving this exercise would be a logical corollary to the recent initiative.

There are compelling reasons why the military on both sides need to explore, expand and institutionalize every opportunity for constructive engagement. First, there seems to be no scope for an agreement on clarification of the LAC in foreseeable future, forget the resolution of the vexed border problem between the two countries. While China has consolidated its strategic reach near the LAC (that include as many as five airfields, 58,000 kilometers of roads, and further extension of Qinghai Tibet Railway to Xigaze), India has woken up rather late in taking an initiative on the same. Either way, any kind of communication gap or misunderstanding could escalate the chances of a mishap on the LAC. Sustained investments in military diplomacy may help avoid this.

Second, Chinese military modernization and its expanding power projection have strengthened the conventional wisdom in India about China being a long term threat. Concurrently, the futility of constructive engagement has brought home the point that the country needs to follow a twin policy of military modernization and military diplomacy to manage relations with China and prevent it from dictating terms on border resolution and other issues. Third, there are areas where China and India may have to cooperate and work together since the costs of 'not cooperating' would be inimical to interests of both the parties. The anti-piracy activity in the Gulf of Aden is one such example.

While the present development in military diplomacy has been initiated from both sides, India needs to walk an extra mile for several reasons. While China has moved ahead in military modernization and power projection, India remains a laggard despite being the largest arms importer in the world. Eventually, India may find it difficult to bridge the 'power gap' with China. Military diplomacy provides a cost - effective tool to manage threat perceptions from China. Moreover, unlike China where the PLA enjoys sizeable clout in foreign policy decision-making, the influence of the armed forces is quite under check in India due to bureaucratic-political counterbalancing and a liberal democratic political set-up. Palpably, China is a proclaimed leader in the art of military diplomacy. In the last few decades, the PLA has engaged a number of countries in different forms of military diplomacy which has yielded rich dividends. India should also expand its basket of military diplomacy and reach out to new countries.

The concurrent rise of China and India has led to a situation where the two militaries are increasingly competing for power and influence. While China has often been criticized in past for indulging in aggressive strategic behaviour towards its neighbours, India's 'strategic restraint' towards other countries under all circumstances has been widely appreciated. If China and India resort to competitive politics, either discreetly or through open arms competition, it will only distract the two countries from their primary task of economic development. On the contrary, using diplomatic mechanisms would help the two militaries to do away with misperceptions, explore cooperative ventures and avoid open confrontation.

*The views expressed in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of India.*

## Commentaries

# Kung Fu Panda: American Invasion of Chinese Culture?

**Bhavna Singh**

*Research Officer, IPCS, New Delhi*

When the sequel to the much-awaited Kung Fu Panda hit the theatres early this month, nobody expected it to lead to a full-fledged controversy on Chinese culture. The recent protests from many sections of Chinese society about the 'Western depiction' of its cultural heritage demonstrate a struggle between states to capitalize on soft power expedients like the panda, China's national animal and kung fu, one of its most popular martial art forms.

The most primitive concern about such incidents is whether one should seek a deeper reading from cinematic representations or treat them merely as works of entertainment. Second, who will determine the belongingness of a cultural object and its availability for public absorption and how; do they need to be enumerated under mechanisms like Intellectual Property Rights? Third, such debates might often be advertising gimmicks to give prominence to the work itself and raise its viewership.

Several Chinese activists have dubbed the production of movies like Kung Fu Panda (both parts) as an attempt by the West to undermine China's national treasure. Most notably, Peking University Professor Kong Qingdong, who says that Chinese symbols have been harnessed to promote American culture, told Xinhua, the state news agency, that the movie 'is a cultural invasion'. Thereafter, the controversy has spread to numerous Chinese social networks and is garnering a robust response. This derives from the fact that this DreamWorks Animation venture has lavishly drawn upon traditional Chinese practices of meditation, fortune-telling and the concept of inner peace.

On the other hand, a huge number of Chinese citizens also believe that this debate has been blown out of proportion. They allege that the boycott called for by renowned artists is a ploy to draw attention to their own artwork on pandas. For instance, the CNN exposes how Zhao Bandi, an avant-garde artist in Beijing who castigated the movie by placing advertisements in newspapers, had previously lobbied for ostracizing Kung Fu Panda I; a proposition rejected by most Chinese. This reaction might also be instigated by fears of competition as the Chinese film industry does not have as much of an audience as Hollywood.

In a poll relay conducted by China Daily, Chinese netizens have overwhelmingly refused to buy these ultra-nationalist arguments with a 14/86 per cent divide (approximately) as on 9 June 2011, the latter supporting free expression and fair play. On the contrary many have dubbed this as an opportunity to broadcast Chinese

culture through the use of best technological know-how. While others consider it as an opportunity for the Chinese film industry to learn from others and improve its own expertise.

However, a more neglected side of the entire debate is the way the movie is a subtle satire that juxtaposes Chinese military warfare and China's discourse on harmony and peace. The opulent didacticism of the movie is evident in its plea for renouncing warfare, finding strength through realizing and accepting one's own being, the significance of unity and brotherhood in the face of difficulties and the doom of self-seekers.

Perceptibly, motion pictures as cultural artifacts do reveal a considerable amount about the societies they are centred around; it will hence be futile to try and dissociate meanings and backdrops and look at the big screen as a mere tool of entertainment. While malpractice and abuse in the film industry by elements craving immediate fame and attention cannot be ruled out, it still remains the most accessible medium for the portrayal of common mores and values, thereby voicing a consensus-generation model which operates in a much larger realm than the print and audio mediums.

Though animation lends a lighter tinge to the gravity of the issues being portrayed, it still remains a powerful method of educating and indoctrinating the common masses. It is in fact more popular than the conventional motion picture industry and is hence seen as a larger threat, which is evident in the fact that there was lesser opposition from Chinese critics when forms of martial art were co-opted by Hollywood. It will also be in vain to establish what belongs where, and to what level things can be co-opted by an individual or community in the context of an increasingly globalized world. This contestation in essence reflects and attests the ascendancy of soft-power options that countries today utilize in addition to mere hard-power resources.

China, as a huge consumer market, will continue to entice the West and film entrepreneurs from other parts of the world to experiment with issues which will help them in catering to the likes and dislikes of China's huge population and expand their audience base. It will be difficult to cooperate multilaterally in the cultural and social realms if claims of sole privileges on certain objects are voiced. Rather, it will be advisable to steer clear of jingoistic appeals and initiate collaborative endeavours in cultural fields like that of media, film-making and sports.

## Li Na and China: Sports as Soft Power?

**Namrata Hasija**

*Research Officer, IPCS, New Delhi*

**I**s Li Na's win at the French Open another example of the multifaceted rise of China in the global scenario? Is she an independent phenomenon? Or is she an outcome of a long term investment by China in sports, as a part of its soft power projections?

The rise of China in the last two decades has been phenomenal in the fields of economics, military power and inclusive growth. To address negative concerns about this rise in the West, China has been pursuing its soft power options through the medium of culture, especially movies, sports, arts and music. It has very effectively used its soft power in the same way the US did during the Cold War era. The promotion of soft power helps in two ways; one is in maintaining China's peaceful rise and the other in helping it gain international appeal.

*On Li Na's rise; how far should the role of the Chinese government be commended? Is the promotion of sports as soft power a success story for China?*

Li Na, 29-year-old from Wuhan, defeated defending champion Francesca Schiavone of Italy to become not only the first Chinese but also the first Asian to win a Grand Slam singles title. Her rise to stardom has been unconventional according to the Chinese yardstick. She started her career as a badminton player during her childhood, but her coach felt she was 'not good enough' and that tennis would be a better option. Tennis was not popular in China at the time, but she took it up at the insistence of her coach who recognized her talent early on. After many fruitless attempts to make it big in the Grand Slams, Li left her career in 2002 to study. However, she returned after being coaxed by the Chinese authorities, and eventually won the 2004 WTA title in Guangzhou.

Unable to capitalize on her 2004 win, Li Na, who is known for her impatient and unconventional ways, decided to break away from the supervision of the state after the 2008 Olympics. Li decided to build her career on her own and reached the finals of the Australian Open this January. Her win was raised to a mythic status by the Chinese media with quotes like "the China-red clay court at Roland Garros symbolized a miraculous victory for the country" and "Li bravely seized the French title and wrote an Asian legend." Chinese authorities and officials also came forward and recorded their appreciation for her achievement. Her win was hailed by the Chinese tennis chief, Sun Jinfang, as "a massive source of pride" and "a breakthrough in a sport that has been dominated mainly by players from Europe, Australia and the Americas." Li

herself commented that her win would encourage many youngsters in China to take up tennis and win international tournaments.

Sports successfully hold together several different elements: the contribution of individual players, championing by members of civil society and supportive efforts by the government. The successful hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games by China (where they also had the highest medal tally) not only convinced the world of its sporting might but also helped China in the economic and political amphitheatre.

The Chinese sports policy has undergone many phases since its inception, from training for work and military defense during the Mao era to the current Olympic strategy. The first stage from 1949-52 focused on preparing citizens for work and the military. This shifted to the Soviet model from 1952-60. It was then developed as a tool for the promotion of diplomacy and the creation of competitive athletes from 1966-76. Finally, in the 1980s, the current Olympic policy was implemented, which produces young stars and Olympic winners for the country.

From the above overview a clear picture of the evolution of the Chinese sports strategy emerges, as also the current scenario in which the government focuses on nurturing potential talent from early adolescence, creating international sporting icons like basketball player Yao Ming, Olympic hurdle champion Liu Xiang and snooker star Ding Junhui. The latest addition to this list is tennis player and French Open winner Li Na. This can be substantiated by looking at the Olympic medal tally of China over the last decade. From 16 golds, 22 silvers and 12 bronzes in 1996, to 51 golds, 21 silvers and 28 bronzes in 2008, when it topped the gold medal tally, China has developed its sports to the utmost.

While the Western media is highlighting the win of Li Na as that of a rebel who was successful after breaking away from the umbrella of Chinese authority, one should not forget that she was nurtured by the state initially, much like many other sporting icons of China. China is a very good example of a state that has used sports as its soft power manoeuvre and produced not only national but international icons idolized and adored by people across the globe, and big and small economies of the world have much to learn from it.

Commentaries**China-Vietnam Friction: The South China Sea Factor****Teshu Singh***Research Officer, IPCS, New Delhi*

As a reaction to the cutting of the exploration cables of an oil survey ship by Chinese surveillance vessels, Vietnam staged a display of its military strength in the contested waters of the South China Sea (SCS). Why has Vietnam reacted in this way now? Will the US intervene if the situation deteriorates?

*Understanding Vietnam's Objective/ Game Plan*

Vietnam claims the island on historical grounds and on the continental shelf principle in accordance with the provision of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It claims the entire Spratly island chains as an offshore district of the Khanh Hoa province and continues to claim the Paracel islands, despite their seizure by China in 1976.

The recent show of military strength by Vietnam in the SCS challenges the self-assertive Chinese sovereignty in the region. Hanoi calls it an 'annual routine training', but this military exercise has taken place after a series of events that have progressively strained relations between China and Vietnam.

Vietnam conducted live-fire military exercises in the South China Sea; it put a barrage of naval artillery for four hours last week, 40kms off Quang Nam province in central Vietnam. The drills were conducted inside the Vietnamese economic zone. By conducting this exercise, Hanoi has sent a clear message to Beijing that it simply refuses to be sabotaged by Chinese supremacy. On the contrary, China considers this as a gross violation of its sovereignty and maritime rights. It reacted by warning Vietnam to stop all its activities.

This exercise occurred against the backdrop of increased anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam. Hundreds of Vietnamese protested over the cutting of the exploration cables of a Vietnamese vessel owned by state energy company 'Petro Vietnam'. The protests took place in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city with the tacit approval of the government. Of significance is that such protests are rare in communist Vietnam.

The Chinese vessels which cut the exploration cables were apparently conducting a seismic survey inside Vietnam's exclusive economic zone. Meanwhile, Hanoi has called it a 'premeditated attack'.

China gave a different version of the same events in a report carried by the official news agency, Xinhua. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said that Chinese fishing vessels were driven away by armed Vietnamese ships. As the boats were driven out, they got entangled in the underwater cables of the Vietnam-

ese ship. They subsequently got caught in the area and two Chinese ships had to come to free the vessels. China reacted to this incident by stating that Vietnam should not take actions that would further add or complicate the issue. In the past few days a number of Vietnamese websites have been hacked by Chinese hackers, which demonstrates the strain in relations.

*US Response*

The ties between Vietnam and the US seem to have grown closer in recent times. Last year, Secretary of States Hillary Clinton spoke of a 'national interest' in the sea and urged a solution for the disputes. The US has called for a 'peaceful solution' of the current crisis.

This can be contextualized within Vietnam's need for a pattern to balance China in the region. For this purpose, Vietnam is moving closer to the US, side-stepping its old war memories. There is also a perception in China that Vietnam is playing at the behest of some other power.

Tensions also rose between China and the Philippines when Manila said it would refer to the SCS as the 'West Philippine Sea'. Tensions have risen between China and other claimants, namely Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, who also have stakes in the region.

Such frictions in the SCS is dangerous for regional security. This Chinese action was against the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea 2002 (DOC) which was signed by ASEAN and China to promote peace and stability in the region. This declaration is not a legal instrument and thus is technically not binding on the signatories. It is perhaps even less persuasive than the code of conduct that many countries in the region desire.

In the absence of any legally binding code of conduct, if China wants a peaceful solution to the dispute, it will have to stop making such assertive postures. The above-mentioned area clearly falls under Vietnamese sovereignty according to the 1982 UNCLOS. Such confrontations in the will further destabilize the region and give external powers like the US a chance to intervene.

## China, the Philippines and Vietnam: Conflicting Claims in the South China Sea

**Teshu Singh**

*Research Officer, IPCS, New Delhi*

In the recent weeks, there have been multiple claims and counter-claims on the South China Sea (SCS) between China, the Philippines and Vietnam. Why are there conflicting claims? And what are the bases of these claims?

The key difference between the SCS as a geographical area in the modern nation-state system and the other disputed areas whose sovereignty is also contested, is that there is no permanent population inhabiting any of these islets. The only group of human population that crisscrosses the SCS waters on a daily basis is the fishermen from coastal communities. Since there is a dispute in the region much of the area remains unregulated.

*China, the Philippines and Vietnam: Who claims what?*

According to the Chinese, the Spratly islands have been an integral part of China for nearly 2000 years. The then superpowers took these islands from the Chinese through the unequal treaties. They are using the naval expeditions to the Spratly islands by the Han Dynasty in 110 AD and the Ming Dynasty from 1403-1433 AD to further strengthen their arguments. In 1947 it issued a map detailing its claim which shows the two island group falling entirely under its own territory. Objecting to the Chinese stance, Vietnam claims the island on historical grounds and on the continental shelf principle in accordance with the provision of the UNCLOS. Vietnam claims the entire Spratly island chains as an offshore district of Khanh Hoa Province. It continues to claim the Paracel Islands, despite their seizure by China in 1976.

The other major claimant, the Philippines, bases its claims of sovereignty over the Spratly on the premise of Res Nullius and Geography. It claims eight islets of the Spratly Island chain, but not the land mass itself. The Philippines claim on the Spratly Island was first expressed in the United Nations General Assembly in 1946; but Philippines involvement in the Spratly did not begin in earnest until 1956 when on 15 May a Philippines citizen Tomas Cloma proclaimed the founding of a new state Kalayaan (freedom island) encompassing 53 features spreading throughout the eastern side of the sea, including Spratly island proper, Itu aba Pagasa and Nam Yit Islands, North Danger reef, Mariveless Reef and Investigator shoal. The other claimants in the region are Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Taiwan.

China is already in possession of the Paracel Islands

which it considers as its own and it is ready to talk on the Spratly Island with Vietnam and other countries on one to one negotiation, no third party or group talks. On the contrary, the Philippine Deputy Presidential Spokesperson said that the country maintains its policy towards a "rules-based settlement approach" and a "multilateral approach" to settling the Spratlys' dispute. "We should exhaust all diplomatic means and be rules-based on the UNCLOS and the existing international law - in settling the dispute in the West Philippine Sea." But unlike the Philippines and Vietnamese who attempt to solve the disputes in the SCS through multilateral mechanisms, China wants to address the issue with individual parties bilaterally. In official terms China wants to 'shelve the dispute, and exploit the resources jointly'.

In recent times, Chinese frictions with both the Philippines and Vietnam have raised the temperature in the SCS region. It shows that the Code of Conduct 2002 has failed and the parties have failed to stick to the spirit of agreement. This in turn has posed a serious threat to the regional stability in the Southeast Asia.

*So what will happen? Will China yield to these claims?*

China's rise has also created concern about how Beijing will use its growing economic and military power in the region. Militarily, China is the dominant regional power and one of the world's emerging great powers. China is well aware of its neighbor's dismay about its emergence and has, since 2001, pursued a "Good neighbor" policy towards the region. It has signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN. This FTA will make the ASEAN members less dependent on the US dollar. However, the SCS remains a sticky issue in China and ASEAN relations. How China engages Southeast Asia will tell much about the nature of China's rise.

To counter China's rise the US is trying to make a comeback in the Southeast Asian region. The US-Vietnam ties are growing stronger and could attract support from Japan and India. The Philippines has already signed the Mutual Defense treaty with the US. All these developments can lead to an emergence of a new regional security architecture in Southeast Asia and undermine the efforts of ASEAN.

## Commentaries

# Red Tourism: A Thriving Economic Industry or a Tool for Ideological Propaganda?

**Namrata Hasija**

*Research Officer, IPCS, New Delhi*

**R**ed Tourism has gained considerable momentum as a phenomenon in China. The government is encouraging tourism around historic sites. Is it purely an economic move? Is it primarily motivated by the need to strengthen the ideological base for the Communist Party of China? Also, is it being used as a propaganda tool for diluting the rising social tensions in China by promoting the 'red values' of sacrifice and hard work among the younger generation? Is it being promoted to rejuvenate the party's popularity on its 90th anniversary?

What is Red tourism?

Red tourism refers to an aspect of the tourism industry which is dedicated to developing sites historically related to Mao Zedong and the revolutionary struggle carried out by the Communist Party of China against the Kuomintang. It has generated not only tremendous revenue for the government but has also revived interest in the country's history, especially the role of Mao Zedong.

Many revolutionary era locations in Yan'an, Hebei, Zunyi, Gansu and so on, which have some linkages to the revolutionary struggle, have been developed into popular tourist sites. This is a governmental push which, with the help of locals, scholars and experts, has transformed these areas into significant revenue generation sites.

Locals, officials and private entrepreneurs have pitched in different schemes to augment revenue. For example, Chu Xianyi, an entrepreneur from Zhejiang province has invested in a show titled 'Battle Defending Yan'an' which is a simulation of a battle fought between the Communist party and the Kuomintang in 1947. This show has become a hit with visitors (most of whom are students from affluent families), attracting 1000 plus visitors a day and generating a yearly revenue in millions. The locals of Yizhang County on their own initiative repaired the houses of the revolutionaries, built roads and even erected signs for the tourists.

The Yizhang county government has also invested approximately US\$ 48 million for the restoration and improvement of historical sites. Innovative items such as Mao keychains, t-shirts, posters, mugs and wallets are being sold at these sites and have developed into a brand. Cigarette companies are pitching in with catchy slogans like 'the only cigarettes which give you the revolutionary spirit', indicating the momentous growth of this industry. Thus, we see that a well-rounded development has been undertaken by all sections of society

which has enabled this industry to grow by leaps and bounds.

Party officials have seized the growing popularity of the movement for their ideological propaganda as articulated by Li Changchun (China's propaganda chief): "Red tourism was a political project to strengthen the people's conviction of sticking to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics." The government is trying to invigorate its position and also dilute the social tensions in China to a certain extent. This is done this by showcasing the hardships faced by Mao and other party members during their struggle.

The next generation of party members are very enthusiastic about the project and have integrated several programmes such as 'red text', 'red songs' and 'red training' within its ambit. Under these programmes, the party members encourage colleges and other organizations to send texts to their students and employees carrying Mao's sayings. The local party secretaries have given orders to state radio and television to promote 'red songs' praising the communist party. Under the 'red training' programme, colleges are encouraged to send students to work in the countryside.

All these moves not only promote the party before its 90th anniversary but also inculcate the so-called 'red values' of the Mao era among the younger generation. Special organizations have been set up (like the 'Red Tourism Revolutionary Traditions Education Activity Leading Team') to organize trips for college students. Many young people who were interviewed after their visits to these sites acknowledged the importance of Mao's ideas in present day China where 'everybody only cared for money'. They also feel that these sites have substantiated their textual knowledge of Mao's sacrifice and hard-work, enabling them to take pride in their past. The party is in fact using Mao's stature and values to portray their linkage with the same values.

The government views this programme as a means to reinforce socialist ideas in order to address problems of rising corruption and social inequality. Although initially it might have been a purely economic move, party leaders are now using it for reinstating the party's image before its 90th anniversary and emphasizing the superior nature of socialism. In a way it is a two-pronged strategy, which is not only bringing rich economic dividends to poor areas but also consolidating the Communist Party of China's grip on power.



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