

Relevance and Importance of Tibetan Diaspora in India

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Abstract

Tibet covers about 2.5 million sq km, vast, but 75% of this is primarily inhabited because of extreme climate. It is located between 28- and 38-degrees North parallels and 78 and 103 East meridian. Tibet is appropriately called the 'Roof of the world' since it is the highest and the broadest plateau globally, ranging between 16000 and 11000 ft in height. For most of the year, mountains remain covered by a thick mantle of snow, with the lowest temperatures touching minus 40 degrees Celsius in the winter. The area is rich in metals and minerals like gold, iron, copper, coal, tungsten, uranium, manganese, tin, etc., which can make the country extremely rich if adequately exploited.

Tibet is closely associated with India as its royal dynasty started from a descendent of Magadha, exiled from India. He became the ruler of Yarlung in 127 BC and was named Nyatra Tsangpo. The Indo Tibetan relationship had always been cordial. Buddhist spiritual leader Shantarakshita established the monastery "Samy's Migyar Lhungi Dubpai Tsukla-Khang" at the request of then King Trisong Delsong. However, the Sino-Tibetan relations were always bitter. Tibetans defeated China decisively in the year 763 and dominated it for almost 20 years there. However, after several reversals, China emerged as a strong power and claimed Tibet to be an integral part of the Peoples Republic of China. Tibetan Government has been in exile in India since 1959. Tibet always served as a buffer state between British administered India and China. India provided asylum to a large number of Tibetans and the Dalai Lama in the '50s.

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1. Introduction

History substantiates that better livelihood forced long movements during the evolution of humanity. Free action was possible since there were no boundaries. However, more ravenousness made this giant planet so small when it started drawing borders and finally ended up with formal treaties like Westphalia¹. No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. Immigrants and refugees conspicuous verticals of displacement complement each other and are often shadowed by a silver lining. Such movements in the past have seen some making a fortune while others getting ruined.

Simple statistics show that approximately 15 million Indians in other countries and 5.2 million immigrants in India are about 0.4% of its population. On the other hand, China is a more populous country, but with a comfortable per capita, land area has 9.7 million Chinese in other countries but only 0.07% immigrants in China². The U.S., called the land of immigrants, has the highest numbers of them in their country³. Countries like the US, Germany, Russia, and the U.K., which were devoid of the workforce, required immigrants to supplement their economic success.

Immigration or flux of refugees is not new to the Indian State. Historically these movements into India took place generally along the Hindu Kush in the west and Patkoi range in the East. In 12th and 16th century Parsis, a Zoroastrian community⁴ moved to what is now called Gujarat in India, after that in 1947 due to partition, 1959 till date from Tibet, 1964 Chakma refugees, 1971 due to persecution of own people in East Pakistan by Pakistan and 1972 Ugandan's of Indian origin. India then, only a 24 years young republic could ill afford such a vast influx. They continued to pour in during the Afghanistan crises in 1979, Sri Lankan civil war in 1983-1987, and recently the Rohangia Muslims⁵.

As per the world refugee report by Bureau for Refugees Programs, Department of States, Jul 1993, India hosted many refugees in 1992. However, the global scenario has now altered. While a few decades back, they were all welcome, the new wave of immigrants is now being ostracized not only by the same countries but by others too. First, in the instant milieu, the great game failed to draw a Tibetan map; it fell under the circumstances to demarcate the boundaries of inner and outer Tibet due to the Chinese whims and fancies. Finally, it failed to negotiate on the text and the map which government representatives of British India initialed, China and Tibet better referred to as Shimla agreement or Mac Mahon treaty⁶. In diplomatic parlance, initialing on the map and the text of a treaty supposedly freezes the treaty, and its implementation awaits formal signing of the text. However, China's mischievous reluctance to sign the international commitment unveiled its intent when PLA annexed Tibet. The second reason of contiguous borders and a significant source of Tibetan Buddhism and, of course, help from the U.S., India became a predictable choice for such immigration. Politico- religious situation coerced by China and the fear of being persecuted by the PLA, Dalai Lama and other Tibetans escaped into India followed by a Sino-Indian conflict.

Despite the reverses in the war and a tense situation, India respected this immigration, accentuating that Tibetans should have been granted autonomy that the Chinese conveniently evaded. This displacement was considered diverse to other immigrations and inferred as one reason for the conflict. In the Indian context, this was also connected to the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin since the larger area of Aksai Chin falls in Tibet and some in Xinjiang. It would not be wrong to assume that the problems surrounding international borders today go well beyond

traditional delineation and delimitation⁷. These problems call for active forms of governance to manage human mobility and interdependence. At the same time, activities of the Tibetan diaspora and the Dalai Lama in India are still an irreconcilable issue with China who has frequently played offensive defense tactics and constrained India to confine Tibetan movements. On the other hand, India has been overcautious on any deliberations on Tibetan autonomy despite having a significant chunk of their diaspora outside Tibet. Failure to establish their own Independent State, the Tibetans today are labeled as Stateless Diaspora adjoining India's border as also within.

2. Tibetan Lifeline in India

Tibetan Diaspora is spread across Asia, America, Europe, and Australia in very insignificant numbers, but it comprises the largest in the world in India. Tibet has an estimated population of about 6 million Tibetans besides 7.5 million Chinese settlers. The estimated population within TAR is 2.62 million, of which 93% are Tibetans, and 6% are Han Chinese, while the rest live in areas outside TAR. Based on a CTA survey, Data of Tibetan diaspora available worldwide is India 94203, Nepal 13514, US 11205, Canada 4640, Switzerland 1540, UK 650, Europe 640, Australia 533, Taiwan 485, New Zealand 66, and Japan 60⁸. There may be a marginal difference, as mentioned by both Edward J. Mills in 2005 and by the 14th Dalai Lama in 2009. Many of these countries have taken up the Tibetan cause by accusing China and passing resolutions in their parliaments calling China to respect the human rights of the Tibetan people; West Germany on October 15, 1987, Italy on April 1, 1989, Australia on December 6, 1990, Belgium on March 29, 1994, and Canada on 14th June 1995. India, the most affected country, has not yet passed any resolution but accepted a Tibetan government in exile to be established. This arrangement gives them autonomous powers and allows them to manage their affairs in India with certain restrictions. Almost half of the Tibetan population embraced agriculture in India, one-third of agro-industry, and some handicraft business. They receive financial and moral assistance from India and other countries. Immigrant Tibetans in India constantly get intricate in the glitches of hanging between two polar ends of being called a foreigner or a refugee. Defined statutes about the rights of the refugees and their protection cannot be advocated in India because India is neither a party to the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the status of refugees nor the 1967 Protocol. They are issued with a registration certificate⁹ which delimits vast opportunities and privileges otherwise available on a refugee card. Unlike many other refugee-hosting countries, India did not adopt integrating Tibetans into its mainstream society. Instead, it facilitated the preservation and promotion of their distinctive culture, tradition, and identity by setting up separate Tibetan settlements in various parts of India under the Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) with a seat in New Delhi established in 1961¹⁰

One of their earliest settlements was Lugsum Samdupling (Bylakuppe) in Karnataka. The first Tibetan higher college in exile, "The Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education," was established in Bangalore with Tibetan language, culture, science, arts, and information technology.¹¹ As of 2009, the Administration was running 61 schools in the concentration of the Tibetan population.¹² Today, three generations of Tibetan refugees are living in India. The first generation comprises mainly of those who came from Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s. The second generation is between 20 and 50 years old and primarily was born and educated in India, and the third

generation is children of school-going age. Over the years, rehabilitation and resettlement policy has also started facing specific challenges like education, unemployment, studying abroad, visiting relatives, other social engagements, and most importantly, getting Indian citizenship¹³. These challenges have prompted some young Tibetans presently spread over 44 other residential settlements across ten states in India to leave India.

Fear of annoying the Chinese had biased the Indian position on these refugees. Of late, they have to struggle to attain the mandatory documents that confer a "Foreigner's Status" upon them, thereby denying them many fundamental human rights such as the right to expression, assembly, and protest, unlike Indian citizens. It also squeezes their job incentives, besides keeping them away from the ambit of various prestigious scholarships despite their qualifications and educational eligibilities. Moreover, in recent years, variations in the legal and administrative status granted to those who arrived in 1959 and those who came later have further compounded the issue, especially after enacting the Indian Citizenship Act (Amendment) of 1986. It allows acquiring Indian citizenship by anyone born in India between January 26, 1950, and July 1, 1987. Thus, it has made a large section of the second and third generations of Tibetans eligible for Indian citizenship.

In 2010 Delhi High Court ruled in favor of an India-born Tibetan woman when she challenged India's Ministry of External Affairs for denying her an Indian passport. However, the government of India's reluctance to abide by the court ruling invited another case by a Tibetan man in September 2016. Giving favorable judgment once again, the court directed the Ministry of External Affairs to treat all Tibetans who meet the criteria for citizenship by birth as Indians and issue them Indian passports. As a result, the Government of India was forced to amend its policy in March 2017. However, it soon added riders to this policy in June 2017 by listing four Tibetans seeking Indian citizenship. Firstly they should surrender their registration certificate (R.C.) and identity certificate. Secondly, they should not be staying in designated Tibetan refugee settlements; thirdly, they must submit an undertaking that they no longer enjoy the benefits offered by the Tibetan government-in-exile. Fourthly, they should submit a declaration that they no longer want any privileges, including subsidies provided to R.C. holders¹⁴.

Tibetan polity has so far been stress-free in India. However, slowly but steadily, the regeio-political structure is undergoing a significant transformation from prototype Tibetan monarchy to an active part of the modern world. Three generations differ in their approach towards the traditional way of life and the modern facilities. The joint family system exists but is fast eroding. There has been a conventional change from all the three forms of marriage, such as monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry, to monogamy in the modern Tibetan community. Love marriages have dominated over arranged marriages. Increased emphasis on the educational and career pursuits among the exiled men and women has introduced a system of late marriages, which are now usually viewed as non-religious except for Tibetan Muslims, where marriage is a religious affair. The Muslim Tibetans living in Kashmir consider themselves as old residents of Kashmir, dating back to 400 years when their ancestors were part of the ancient silk route. Dr. Adfer Rashid Shah of Jamia Millia Islamia University expresses that the community has culturally integrated the Kashmiri society but not "psychologically"¹⁵.

It is debatable that policy akin to the one in 1971 of sending the immigrants back when the time improves can be implemented in this scenario, having settled them in the hinterland after the

Nangpala Pass shooting incident¹⁶ in 2005 in China, its latest ally Nepal. Tibet is unlikely to foster national feelings and patriotism for their diaspora to cross over to Tibet via Nepal. Apprehensive China would never tolerate Tibetans living in India for the last six decades to return to Tibet. China's economic rise and resultant intimidating behavior highlight that it is becoming more and more improbable for even powerful countries to control Chinese expansionist designs, let alone smaller ones seeking freedom from it. Tibetans were worried about the abysmal stance taken by India, displaying a lack of interest lest seek Chinese displeasure during recent celebrations of the 60th anniversary of Dalai Lama's escape from Tibet.

In the present global scenario, especially after drawing the boundaries of Nation States, it is challenging to allow or initiate a peaceful immigration policy. Tibetan diaspora in India, as well as other countries, have been quite so far. The government in exile has little authority to manipulate the decisions of New Delhi and therefore advises its people to take a backward recourse to avoid confrontation. Moreover, the fourteenth Dalai Lama moderates all controversial issues. However, after his demise, it is anticipated that there will be a revolutionary change in charity and the notion of rights. Therefore, there should be no opportunity to settle the Tibetan issue in totality when it is still difficult and not impossible.

Suspicious mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic by China and its simultaneous military coercion in the region, including India, adjoining Tibet, has resulted in world outrage against the middle kingdom. Tibet's freedom and occupation of Aksai Chin (part of Indian Territory) have gained importance once again. The present situation has anchored every Chinese dream and altered the global Geopolitics overnight to allow those seeking it. A reprise of such an occasion may not be possible in this century. It is time for India to shed idealism and embrace realism.

3. Tibetans Status in Tibet

There are innumerable historical records of Tibet being a different country, but the Chinese do not believe in old treaties, and the world had also almost forgotten the Tibetan cause. On the one hand, the initial fire shown by India and the U.S. to fight for Tibetan autonomy slowly died down, and on the other hand, the Chinese consolidated their position and changed their weakness into their strength. The Status of Tibetans in their land, which China occupied in 1950, is an example of the highest form of Human Rights violation. Over the past six decades, China has changed the demography of Tibet, wiped out Tibetan Buddhism, patronized and indoctrinated the young generation to a more or less Han way of living, eroding the Tibetan culture. Some important monks, especially those sympathetic to Dalai Lama or identified by him, are either missing or in Chinese custody.

The next generation will forget their history and be forced to be more pragmatic with the future environment. Most likely, they will strike a deal with themselves to adapt to the Han way of living and finally adopt it. China has created an optical illusion to avoid criticism and has developed Tibet to lure the young generation and provide them lustrous necessities. It has simultaneously put in place the Moist concept of "harass the enemy so much that the will to fight breaks even before the actual fight begins" by ensuring very comprehensive security and military apparatus to incapacitate any design of religious or freedom movement the Tibetans.

Sadly the dispute of Tibetan autonomy promised to India, and re-claiming Aksai Chin from China had gathered dust. However, the recent statement of the Home Minister of India in the

Parliament that J&K, including Aksai Chin, was an inalienable part of India was a welcome step. It's time India prepares to take it back. Today despite the facilities and infrastructure, locals are still inclined towards freedom. Many still escape to India to avoid the wraths of the Chinese. This undemocratic Chinese behavior is seen in Tibet and all the five autonomous regions, which indicates that they were not part of China but were merged under the middle kingdom concept and promised the so-called autonomy to offer some solace.

4. Indian Perspective on the Karmapa

Karmapa is the third-highest Lama after Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama in the Tibetan hierarchy. The 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, born in Tibet, was formally enthroned as Karmapa in Sep 1992 at the age of 7 years at Tsurpho Monastery, the traditional seat of Karmapa's in Tibet. He was surprisingly recognized by China and Dalai Lama too. Unofficial reports reveal that Dalai Lama probably wanted to trade off Gedhun Choeki Nyima's choice as Panchen Lama was identified in 1995 but not seen after that. Interestingly Karmapa, recognized by the Chinese, was harassed by the Chinese themselves, compelling him to escape in 1999 and reach India via Nepal on January 5, 2000.

The Chinese media quickly issued a statement that Ogyen Trinley Dorje fled to India to procure the "sacred black hat" lying in Rumtek in Sikkim and his desire to meet his competitor in India. After reaching India, he blamed the Chinese for using him as a political weapon for detaching the Tibetans from Dalai Lama. Due to the suspicious movement, he was given refugee status in India but not recognized as the Karmapa. Moreover, the recovery of huge cash, including the Chinese yuan, from his custody created a mistrust of his Chinese agent. As a result, he was not allowed as much freedom of movement and other facilities as Dalai Lama. However, he was allowed to visit some countries, including the USA, in 2008 to preach Dharma. The Modi government eased the restrictions placed on his movement in 2015.

In May 2017, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, when permitted by India to go to Europe on a three-month visa, acquired a Dominican passport and its citizenship by investing in the Jungle Bay. Without the knowledge of the Indian government with the alibi, it was easier to travel with this passport rather than on Indian Yellow Book or identity certificate requiring Indian permission every time. In the bargain, he lost the legality of being an Indian refugee and its inherent emotional accommodations enjoyed by other Tibetans. As per Indian law, the yellow book becomes invalid if its holder obtains travel documents from any other country. So legally, he would now require to deposit his registration certificate issued by India and travel back to India only on a visa. The India-based Central Tibetan Administration and Dalai Lama were waiting for Karmapa's return to India to attend the Dharamsala conference in November 2018. The successor Dalai Lama could have been announced. Nevertheless, it got postponed due to the sudden demise of Kathok Gets Rinpoche, the supreme head of the Nyingma tradition in Nepal under unusual circumstances¹⁷.

Meanwhile, Trinley Thaye Dorje, born in India in May 1983 at 11 years, was formally crowned Karmapa at Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi. It ensued a scrimmage between the Lamas, one in China and the other in India, as to the genuine Karmapa. The Indian Supreme Court backs the claims of Trinley Thaye Dorje as the Karmapa. Both the Karmapas managed to meet discreetly in rural France and make a joint statement agreeing to institutions of two Karmapas at the same time and highlighting their fight for autonomy and the cause of the

Tibetans. The paradigm shift of political power in the hands of Xi Jinping as a Lifetime President had further resulted in the weakening of the Tibetan cause, losing the relevance of the Tibetan diaspora in India and making it irrecoverable. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to predict if Ogyen Trinley Dorje will ever return to India. Even if he does, he will have to face tough competition from his rival, Thaye Trinley Dorje. He probably has these two options. Firstly, seek asylum in the U.S., set up the Karmapa seat in exile in the U.S., obtain a Green card, and travel to any country. The U.S. is likely to leverage its presence to its advantage. Secondly, since the Chinese government has recognized him, return to the Tsurphu monastery, which has been renovated by the Chinese government recently, to lure the Lama and maintain the support of the local Tibetans.

5. Succession Plan and its Impact

The tradition of a succession of Dalai Lamas has been in practice since 1391. He is the traditional religious and temporal head of Tibetan Buddhists' chosen rather than elected'. He has the authority to select the body into which he will reincarnate, meaning that the current Dalai Lama is a reincarnation of the last. The search for the reborn Dalai Lama is the High Lamas of the Gelugpa tradition and the Tibetan government. Over the years, the Dalai Lama has continued to lobby for self-rule and advocates autonomy that would allow the Tibetans to maintain their religion under Chinese rule. According to Dalai Lama, even if he dies today, only the Tibetan people can choose the Dalai Lama, not someone from outside. He further clarified that if this situation of Tibet continues, he will be born outside Tibet away from the control of the Chinese authorities since the very purpose of a reincarnation is to continue the unfinished work of the previous incarnation¹⁸.

Corresponding with the 60th commemoration of the Dalai Lama's escape, the Chinese intensified the Communist Party's ideological reach by showcasing aggressive military drills and a "Devil's Week" near monasteries and elsewhere to highlight the political battle against "separatism" targeting Dalai Lama. To make it more prominent, the Chinese released a 'White Paper' underlining the appointment of Tibetan reincarnated lamas at China's will to eradicate loyalty to the Dalai Lama, replace it with allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party, and "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism.

The White Paper reflected the deepening institutionalization of the current policy model in Tibet and Xinjiang, combining coercive securitization and militarization to accelerate political and cultural transformation. In a White Paper released ten years earlier, Beijing had stressed that the "central government will always keep its door open for the 14th Dalai Lama to return to a patriotic stand." However, the 2019 White Paper did not mention any dialogue with the Dalai Lama¹⁹.

In the current circumstances, there is a high possibility of a "double reincarnation," one from a free country and the other chosen by the Chinese government. The current Dalai Lama has said that there is a chance that he will not be reborn and that if he is, it will not be in a country under Chinese rule. There are also anecdotes that the reincarnation could be found in India, where the Dalai Lama has lived in exile for 60 years after fleeing Tibet. The Dalai Lama maintains what Nehru was promised by the Chinese, i.e. autonomy that would allow the Tibetans to preserve their religion under Chinese suzerainty. Recipient of the Nobel peace prize in 1989 and has fought for the Tibetan cause from its inception, Tibetans worldwide admire him as their spiritual leader

and cultural icon. He is central to any peace building process in Tibet and outside. It is evident that peoples identify themselves with him being the epitome of peaceful practices, and he enjoys a predominant lineage over them across the world. However, after the demise of the 14th Dalai Lama, the behavioral pattern of the Tibetan Diaspora is likely to be more aggressive. Socio-cultural changes have witnessed the world immigration scene drastically change in the recent past. Equality, citizenship, job, and food security have become a more or less relevant package. Not providing any of these will certainly create trouble for the governments accepting them. Therefore, it is pertinent that countries are having the Tibetan diaspora, especially India and U.S., who are on the same platform concerning the Tibetan cause, give serious thought before it is too late.

6. United States of America Position

What if the next Dalai Lama reincarnates in U.S. Well, the U.S. is opposed to any move by China to impose its own Dalai Lama on the Tibetan people. It opines that religious organizations should make religious decisions and not by any political regimes²⁰. It has a chequered history of supporting the Tibet cause and pressuring China at appropriate times. In October 1997, Chinese President Jiang Zemin was invited to Capitol Hill for breakfast with the members of Congress. The meeting became a challenging exchange with congressional critics of Chinese government policies on nuclear arms proliferation and Tibet.²¹ U.S. Secretary of State on October 31, 1997, appointed Mr. Gregory B. Craig as the first Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs while Chinese President Jiang was still on U.S. soil²². The U.S. had always provided covert and overt help to the Tibetan diaspora. It clarified its intent by allowing a government-funded radio transmission program into Tibet and the Congressional gold medal to Dalai Lama in October 2007. There are hosts of Tibetan institutions and committees in the U.S. to look after their economic, democratic, and political interests. The U.S. at times also hints that the U.N. seat and the recognition of the Chinese government were agreed by the U.S. solely on the democratic ideology of the government.

On April 25, 2018, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved Senate Resolution 429 to change and upgrade some previous policies on Tibet, including a selection of the Dalai Lama. In October 2018, the Karmapa was invited by the House of Representatives to a function at the Capitol Visitor Centre and also allowed to make a special message telecast from the U.S. Albeit a different environment, the government in exile prefers the U.S. citizenship to Indian. In December 2018, President Donald Trump signed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, pressurizing China to open the highly restricted region and not refuse visas to U.S. officials. It has also issued a travel advisory for its citizens traveling both to Tibet and the Muslim-dominated Xinjiang.

On May 19, 2020, the U.S. secretary of State articulated to China to make public the Panchan Lama Gedhun Choeki Nyima identified by Dalai Lama in 1995. It is believed that the boy was taken into custody three days after the announcement and has not been seen since then²³.

In Jan 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (HR 4331), the most comprehensive policy bill on Tibet since the Tibet Policy Act-2002. The supermajority vote on the legislation is landmark support by the U.S. for the Central Tibetan Administration on the Middle Way Policy and genuine autonomy for Tibetans, religious freedom, environmental protection of Tibetan plateau, and restoration of independence in Tibet.²⁴

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has commended this move of Congress. In addition, in May 2020, Republican senator Scott Perry has introduced a bill in the United States Congress to recognize Tibet as an independent nation²⁵.

The U.S. has all the money and the will to confront China on this issue. They can not only leverage the Tibetan diaspora outside but even inside Tibet to meet its ends. U.S. and India have always shared the same platform on Tibetan cause²⁶ because both were deceived by the Chinese, the U.S. for recognizing democratic Chinese government, which later became communist, and India for informally accepting Tibet as part of China with autonomy which the Chinese refused to give. Relations between U.S. and China were already heating up due to the South China Sea, trade war, suppression of democratic movement in Hong Kong, the Korean peninsula, religious and democratic suppression in Tibet, threat to democracy in Taiwan. As if this was not enough, the spread of the Covid -19 Pandemic by China throughout the world and the deaths caused in the U.S. was explicitly articulated as a Chinese attack on the U.S.

Indian and U.S. securities converge on Tibetan issues. In extreme conditions, with Indian initiative, Western countries led by the United States can physically intervene in Tibet. However, the nature and intensity of U.S. intervention in Tibet will predominantly depend on the State of Indo-US relations and interest and seriousness India exhibits; after all U.S. came to India's rescue in the wake of the Chinese incursion in 1962 by providing substantial military assistance²⁷. This will strengthen the position of India vis-a-vis China and counter Chinese influence in Asia vis-à-vis the U.S.

7. India Options

In dealing with China, it is essential to understand Chinese character build over the centuries and especially its embryonic history where "Zhong Guo," the middle kingdom, and "the "mandate of heaven" perception are pervasive in their mind. Subjugation was always a central part of the Chinese view of international affairs. The emperor legally was the universal ruler, and any territory not under direct control was unilaterally considered either a tributary or rebellious. India saw it closely in 1962 by losing Aksai Chin and regular illegal and unwarranted intrusions into Indian Territory till date. Moreover, by showing generosity to the Tibetan diaspora, India took upon itself the unfinished mission of autonomy for Tibetans. India's present stature and the existing world environment post-Covid-19 pandemic indicate it's time to reverse the tide. China has always intimidated India during moments of weakness. The 1962 war was thrust when India had just begun to develop as a nation without any comparable armed forces scheduling it during Cuban missile crises when neither U.S. nor Russia was in a position to help India. Wangdung incident or Somdurong Chu incursion of 1986 came up in the gap between Indira Gandhi's assassination and the early Prime ministership of Rajiv Gandhi. The Chip Chap Valley intrusion took place during the Kargil war. The 2008 incursion into the Finger's Area of northern Sikkim surfaced at a time when the besieged Congress-led UPA government was on the verge of collapse during the nuclear pact with the U.S. Chinese troop's incursion in Chumar Sector in Sep 2014, thinking that India would not react while hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping and show restraint in line with Hindu code of conduct and its cultural values of "Atithi Devo Bhava." In May 2020, they secretly occupied heights and ground, especially in Galwan valley in the Indian Territory of Ladakh when the entire world, including India, was busy battling against the Covid-19 pandemic.

China has settled its border issue with 12 countries out of 14 except India and Bhutan²⁸. So why is it that every time it occupies Indian Territory in the name of "difference of perception of the boundary?" Is it that in the last 58 years, PLA has not been taught map reading and therefore is unable to identify the disputed area which both the parties marked till the final solution was arrived at, or is it that the Chinese know that the Indian troops on the ground are difficult to handle. Still, the higher leadership in New Delhi is indecisive and will take recourse to idealism. Therefore, it is either detrimental, firstly, for the frontline troops who should consistently achieve moral ascendancy over the Chinese but fail to do so due to lack of exploitation of a favorable situation, thereby losing ground. Secondly, failure of stimulating nationalism amongst fellow citizens whose moral support is vital for the frontline troops due to continued inaction by New Delhi.

Indian habit of 'wait and watch' is endemic. New Delhi has usually avoided global controversies by hiding behind the worn-out non-aligned status, forcing an idealist attitude and a middle path approach, enabling peoples to probe us on strategic autonomy often. The absence of a strategic culture in India has often eluded us from exercising our will in premeditated issues and made us miss the bus many times. However, with the present dispensation, India has started to make peoples feel its unambitious but unmistakable presence in the international order. Substantively powerful nations treat their umbrella states and the diaspora outside as their extension to project power.²⁹ China has never hesitated to use its diaspora in the U.S. and other countries to steal designs and technology for its development, its economic clout, Security Council seat, its proxies Pakistan and now Nepal, which has its diaspora in India in sensitive organizations to foment trouble in India.

Tibetan diaspora in India is our strength against China with a different dimension of soft power³⁰. Today, the post controversial spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and simultaneous military and economic manipulations by China has enraged the world. Besides taking other actions, it has once again nudged China on Tibetan freedom and the disappearance of the Panchen Lama. The U.S. has also taken this opportunity to express Chinese incursions in India as a threat to the sovereignty of India and offered to arbitrate. China has become an eyesore, and the world is waiting to teach China a lesson. It has assisted in bringing to limelight the Tibetan and associated issue of Aksai Chin all over again. It would be irresponsible and unwise if India fails to harvest this opportunity and act with realism. There can't be a better time for India to align with the U.S. and the G7 to incite the Tibetan issue and coerce China to settle the border once for all. Israel has nurtured its national interest from the U.S. for a long time courtesy of its diaspora in the U.S. Nepal has embraced realism. India should learn its lessons from here and use the Dalai Lama and Tibetan diaspora to settle issues.

India must strengthen its diplomacy with the Russians also. Although Russia is today friendlier to China, India must remind them of their support on the same issue earlier. During the initial Tibetan revolt, the Russians backed the Chinese; however, after the Chinese started blaming India for its alleged role in the uprising, the Russians kept silent about the issue and did not support China's accusations of India. The same was when China illegally occupied the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh; Radio Moscow only announced that both the countries should sort out the border issue bilaterally. There was no comment in favor of the Chinese as expected from a friendly communist bloc country³¹.

The United States does not have geopolitical interests involved in Tibet in the manner India has. Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau does not affect the immediate security interests of the United States. However, U.S. intervention in Tibet serves two major attractions. First, the U.S. is one of the oldest and largest democracies globally and champions the cause of freedom, democracy, and promotion of human rights worldwide. Second, in the post-Cold War era, China has emerged as a rival power of the United States. If Tibet gets independence, it is more likely to join a liberal democratic group of countries. A friendly country in the neighborhood of China can be of great use for the United States in case of any eventual hostility with China. Even if it is negotiated to grant Tibet genuine autonomy, Tibet will likely emerge as a demilitarized and denuclearized Zone of Peace. Both ways, it will be an advantage to India but with a caveat that it takes the initiative.

Suppose it was prudent for China to occupy 5180 Sq. Km of Indian Territory in Shaksgam Valley illegally ceded by Pakistan, occupy 38000 Sq. Km Aksai Chin in 1962 war and construct CEPC on Indian Territory under Pakistan's illegal occupation. It is equally prudent for India to pay back China in the same coin now. Fifty-eight years passed, the world, including the Tibetans, looked towards Indian leadership to address the agenda with a carrot and a stick by "killing two birds with one stone"³². It is here that the relevance of the Tibetan diaspora in India gains importance. India should use this opportune moment to work towards a grand strategy of employing all the resources of our nation (including the Tibetan diaspora) or a coalition of nations to achieve this peace. It will also showcase India's stern message in light of its stand against terrorism that talks and terror will not go together even with China.

All countries under Chinese debt have understood the "cheque book diplomacy" and started smelling the Chinese deception plan. It will become almost impossible to articulate the national interest versus the humanitarian anguishes in time to come. Severe problems require extreme solutions. If India cannot think of the Balkanisation of China, which demands time and great strategic coordination, it can recover the recent historical losses. Probably the answer lies between these truths. History will never forgive this indecisiveness, and perhaps India will keep deliberating whether it is destined to be less strategically autonomous? Is our ability and willingness to practice it is likely to be inconsistent and variable. Can India ever recover its lost pride, a small piece of land that may not even matter to a country possessing the third largest land area in the world and may have kept this only as a blackmailing tool? Can India get the freedom its friendly Tibetans brothers promised China itself? Chinese character has taken shape in light of its suppression for 100 years, but why should India pay the price for it.

Today's world is of alliances, best learned from Nepal. Standing alone will only increase asymmetry between India and China because the environment discusses China surpassing the U.S. economy and not India surpassing China. Remember what Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam had advised, "Unless India stands up to the world, no one will respect us; in this world, fear has no place; only strength respects strength." It would, therefore, be expected that India compels China to maintain status quo ante, delineate and demarcate the LAC itself, push China to agree on infrastructure development in Indian side as close to the LAC as China has developed, if not agreed then dismantle Chinese infrastructure up to a standard distance on their side as that of India's only after this should the progress of the talks further. If military, diplomatic and political understanding fails to provide equal benefits, then, of course, resort to "attain Indian Army's

doctrine," and that is "to preserve National interests and safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of India against external threats and internal subversion by deterrence or by waging war.

8. Conclusion

British-India's foreign and defense policy of a 'united India' rested on the evolution of the 'buffer state' Tibet being one of them. Two important but separate events seem to be responsible for the homeless Tibetan diaspora today. Firstly the British, while drawing the boundary between British India and Tibet, did not pursue it with totality or in a conclusive manner, and China, despite initialing on the text and the map of inner and outer Tibet during the Shimla conference, mischievously withdrew from this international commitment³³ and forcibly occupied Tibet. Secondly, the fleeing of Dalai Lama to take refuge in India during the Chinese occupation of Tibet was erroneously perceived in China as a long-term expansionist interest of India. This unfolded the history of both the nations, and one wrong decision by the political masters led to a lifelong untenable compromise and trust deficit, embarking both the countries on a collision course then-- collision course now.

When India proclaimed its independence from Britain, it did not reveal its independence from the British territorial claims and therefore legally inherited all the maps from the British, which included the Aksai Chin territory and the line demarcated by McMahon the boundary between China and Tibet. Moreover, all postcolonial countries have the right to interpret the borders within which they achieved independence as legally theirs, and therefore non-negotiable. India had borders with Tibet; it's time to maintain the status quo. Understanding modern Chinese warfare provides numerous case studies where Chinese leadership claimed: "military pre-emption as a strategically defensive act." Repeated instances of military pre-emption/offense in the name of defense include 1950 Tibet invasion, followed immediately by entry into Korean War, 1962 war with India, 1969 border conflict with the Soviet Union, 1974 China's seizure of the Paracel Islands from Vietnam, 1979 attack on Vietnam and regular incursions into Indian Territory post the 1962 war.

After 58 years of the Sino-Indian war, a more flexible approach in maintaining restraint, economic growth, a degree of amicability in political relations, and a strengthened cordial bilateral relationship is in place, but with neither an international border nor the promise of giving autonomy to the Tibetans. Chinese reluctance, or for that matter, refusal to show a version of the so-called and self-termed LAC, points towards a giant ploy of progressively building up a case not to return Aksai Chin and instead claim Arunachal Pradesh while following a strict timeline for its preparation. Regular intrusions into the Indian side of the border and scuffles with Indian forces substantiates its motives. Chinese deployment of heavy military equipment in Tibet towards the border with India, when there is no threat from across, compels India to think otherwise.

The rise of India from a gloomy to a glowing position in the global arena, coupled with several virtues like enormous size, huge population, convenient geostrategic location, progressive military might, the changed nuclear paradigm, impressive economic growth, and its pivotal role in the Indian Ocean and South-east Asia has inspired international arena to maintain

exceptionally cooperative engagements with India. This essential Indian diplomacy also compelled China to follow a policy of 'constrained cooperation with India.

Asia's century had started to witness China as a critical variable in regulating trends in international politics. Its growth would assist world growth was accepted as a new testament by the world order. However, it has now been globally felt to be inconsistent in reality. Actions speak more than words. The world has realized that an assertive China is, in fact, dangerous for the world and disastrous for the region. Undoubtedly China is to blame itself for the situation it is under.

Today with artificial intelligence, robotic developments, nationalism card, and vast asymmetrical options, warfare has increasingly grown more complex. Military and non-military factors have started to converge in war and in programs designed to secure peace. Due to the changing concept of immigrants and their expectations globally, they are no longer individualized or obedient prospective citizens. Instead, they may retain dual citizenship, agitate for special trade deals with their homelands, demand aid in exchange for electoral support, seek to protect family immigration quota, and in the bargain influence foreign policy³⁴. There are various examples latest one being protests in U.S. Dalai Lama, and Tibetan diaspora in India was our strength to compel China to withdraw from Aksai Chin and other areas illegally occupied by it. However, over the years, this strength has only been battered. Surly after the demise of the Dalai Lama, this will indubitably turn into our weakness, precisely in sync with Chinese strategy. Covid-19 has come as a one-time chance, and India must use all its abilities not to let go of this opportunity.

Without explaining the military equivalence and other economic factors that are better left to the experts, it is evident that we have parity in the sector that we are talking about. Although equally poised militarily on all fronts, the Chinese cannot move much from other areas at this point. Moreover, the world is with us on any decision we take. Surrounded on two sides by two historical inimical neighbors and the third one in the making, India must use its opportunities expeditiously before it is too late. If we believe in the dictum "strike while the iron is hot," then the iron is hot now.

China is confident in its concept of the "middle kingdom" and has been working on it after Mao's death. India is equally confident of the Shaloka from Mahabharata, "Paritranaaya Sadhunam Vinasaya Cha Duskritam Dharma-samstha Panarthaya Sambhavami Yuge Yuge."

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