



# UNREST IN TIBET:

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND THE RESPONSE



# IMPLICATIONS

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## **IN SIX IMPORTANT AREAS**

- Sharpened Domestic Political Divide.
- Militarization of the Tibetan Movement.
- The Fate of the Tibetan Question.
- Complicates Sino-Indian Border Issue.
- Impinges On Sino-India Relations.
- Affects Engagement With the International Community.



# 1. Domestic Divide Sharpened

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- Debate on Endorsing the Chinese Position V/S Using the “Tibet Card” .
- For the Left (In UPA ruling Coalition), Tibet is China’s internal matter.
- For the BJP and other Opposition Parties like the SP, No appeasement of China, review “Tibet Policy”, Seek UN Intervention.
- Strategic Community favours use of Tibet card to settle border.
- Civil Society stands for the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Human Rights
- Public Opinion Survey: Dalai Lama has no role in Tibetan Violence, No expulsion of the Dalai Lama, though his presence has affected relations with China, Let Tibetan’s protest against China, Don’t Boycott Olympics, Don’t spoil relations with China.



# Some Opinions:

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- “My sympathies lay with the Tibetans. I feel what’s happening in Tibet is not right and in my small way, I should show my solidarity” ---Bhutia (Football captain, while refusing to carry the Torch).
- When I do run with the Olympic Torch... it is not in support of China. In fact, it will be with a prayer in my heart for the people of Tibet” ---Amir Khan (Film Actor).
- “I am totally against mixing up politics with sports” --- P.T.Usha (Long runner)
- “China is so powerful, will it change if we protest in this minor, firecracker manner” ---Dr. Narayn Hegde (NGO, slated to carry the torch).

## 2. Militarization of The Tibetan Movement



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- Frustration and Alienation of the Tibetan youth from the Dalai Lama's "Middle Path", in view of China's refusal to talk.
- Began By 2003: Chinese White paper showing contempt for the Dalai Lama; **Strong Influence of American Tibetans.**
- In 2004, Tibetan Parliament asks for review of "Middle Path", after one year, if China does not negotiate.

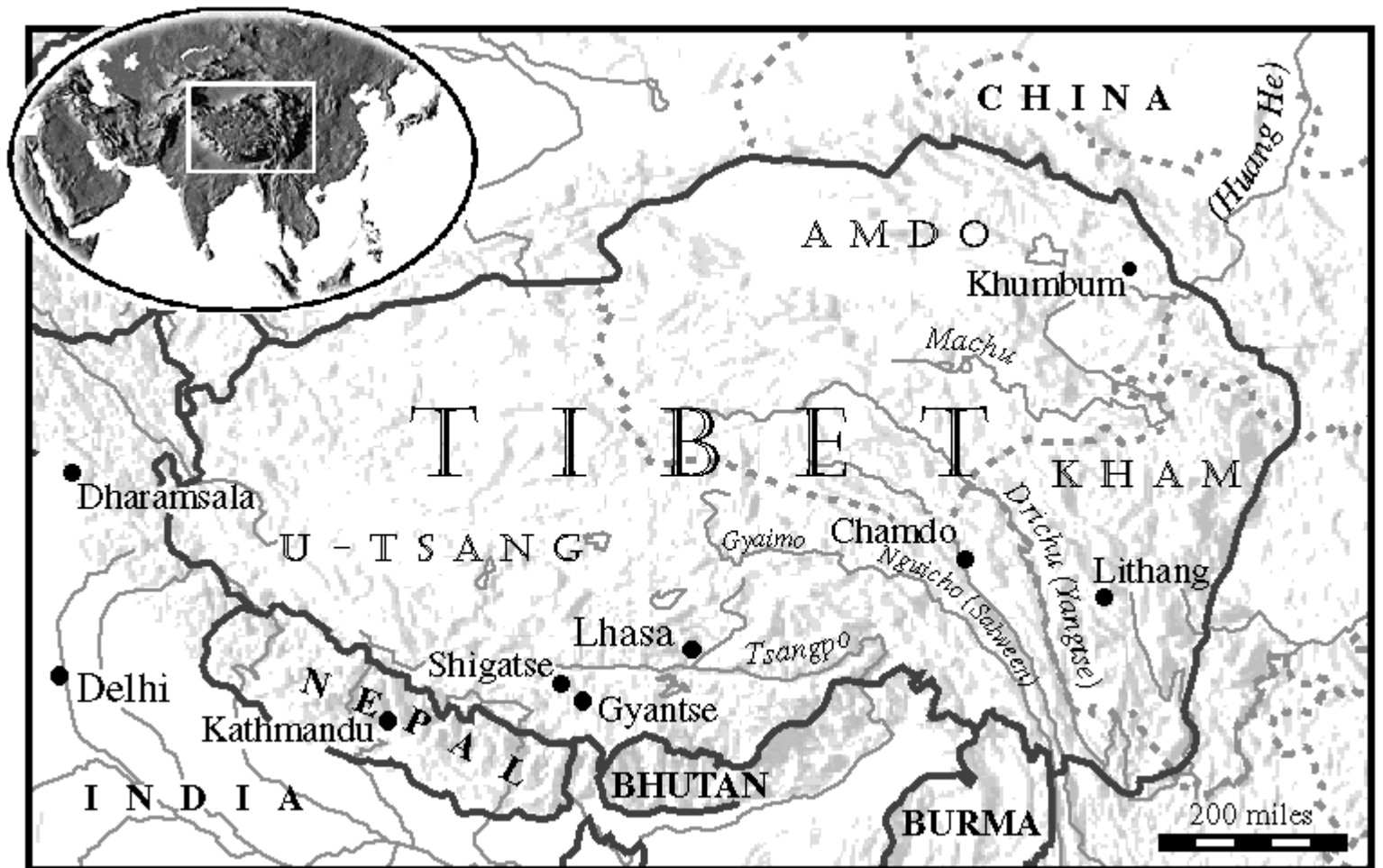


# Militarization...

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- January 2008, Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), The Tibetan Women's association, Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet, the National Democratic Party of Tibet and the Students For a Free Tibet, launched "Tibetan People's Uprising Movement.
- TYC, a 30,000 strong group, has training programmes that include study of Nepal's Maoists movement and the LTTE.
- The Tibetans of greater Tibet in Kham and Amdo regions (Now merged with other Chinese provinces) restive since 1887. Their strong protests in Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan Provinces during current unrest.

# Militarization...





# Militarization...

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- Will make the Dalai Lama irrelevant and gain strength after his death.
- Will add to India's internal security concerns.
- Tibetan movement, with more than 100,000 refugees, may develop links with insurgent and terrorist groups.
- Will vitiate relations with China.

# 3. Fate of the Tibetan Question



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- With the Unrest, the Tibetan autonomy cause has reemerged in force.
- The evolution of India's Tibet Policy needs recall:
  - 1947-** Tibet invited as an independent country to the Asian Relations Conference. Tibetan Flag removed to accommodate Chinese protest but status was not changed.



# Tibetan Question...

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**1948-** A policy paper suggests “no aggressive support for unqualified Tibetan independence”, so as to avoid prejudicing relations with China.

**1950-** Opposed China’s military move in Tibet, but refused to sponsor Tibet’s appeal to the UN for intervention.

**1951-** Acquiesced the imposition of 17 Point Peaceful Liberation Agreement on Tibet by China. China has not implemented it faithfully.

**1954-** *Panchsheela* Agreement. India gives up its military escorts stationed in Yatung and Gyantse, hands over its communication facilities and rest houses in Tibet to China and rewrites its trade and economic privileges. All this in return for Chinese assurances of Autonomy.



# Tibetan Question...

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**1959-** Opposes Chinese suppression of Tibetan uprising, accepts the Dalai Lama and 80,000 refugees and allows the Tibetan government in exile to operate for cultural and religious issues (No politics).

**1887-** No strong protest against Chinese action.

**2003-** The phrase “autonomous region of China” for Tibet was changed to “part of the Chinese territory” during PM Atal Behari Vajpayee’s visit. The Chinese then accepted Sikkim as India’s integral part.



# Tibetan Question...

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**2002-2005-** The Dalai Lama was encouraged to negotiate “meaningful autonomy” with the Chinese.

**2008-** During Man Mohan Singh’s visit, Tibet was not even mentioned. Internal protest was taken as having submerged under economic and infra-structural development.

***The Dalai Lama is 73. Succession issue will fuel the Tibetan unrest, dragging India directly in, as the Dalai Lama wants his successor from among the refugees.***



## 4. Sino-Indian Border Dispute

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- Tibet is closely linked to the Sino-Indian border issue as the border is mainly with China and seems to have been settled under the British-Tibet Treaties of 1904 and 1914 (Simla)... McMahon Line. China refuses to accept these Treaties and the "Line" and hence the dispute.
- In the absence of controversy over Tibet for the past nearly two decades, considerable mutual confidence building on the border issue:
  - 1993 and 1996 "Maintenance Of Peace and Tranquility" on the border agreements.
  - 2005 Guiding Principles agreement for the settlement of border.

# India's Tibet Border





# Border Dispute...

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- The border negotiations slow. Chinese side hesitant in exchanging maps and concluding a framework agreement on border.
- If China terms the Arunachal Pradesh and Tawang as parts of Southern Tibet, then the whole question of Tibet and the border, is reopened a fresh. This vitiates CBMs and progress in border talks made so far.
- With the Tibet issue becoming hot, China may delay border talks further, suspecting India's role. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao hinted at this while saying: "This complex issue left from the past cannot be expected to be resolved overnight".



# Border Dispute...

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- Following the Arunachal Pradesh controversy and the Tibetan unrest, China has strengthened troops deployment and movement to control Tibetans inflow. India has also deployed more troops. Border has become live. There are increasing number of incursions.
- Chinese official think-tanks (China Institute of International Strategic Studies) have already started comparing the situation to 1962 and issuing warnings: "A Warning to the Indian Government: Don't Be Evil".



# Border Dispute...

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- The Dalai Lama's govt. in exile endorses India's position on the border. Its Prime Minister Samdhong Rinpoche said:

*we have continued the legitimate government of the Dalai Lama, which is now 367 years old. The government has agreed to McMahon Line and Tawang and other issues were agreed on the basis of the watershed principles... If the Chinese say that the sixth Dalai Lama was borne in Tawang so it belongs to Tibet then if one Dalai Lama was borne in Mongolia, can I say Mongolia is a part of Tibet?*



# Border Dispute...

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- Since the Tibetan controversy has reemerged, India's strategic community want to use it to pressure China.
- The real question is, will China be pressurized if Tibetan fires are fanned? Or Is Tibetan revolt strong enough to rattle the Chinese into any compromise with India?



## 5. Sino-Indian Relations...

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- Greatly improved political and economic engagement may be adversely affected if the unrest in Tibet persists and gains momentum.
- Neither India Nor China can afford to have tense bilateral relations or insecurity on the borders when they are growing so fast.
- China being hyper-sensitive on Tibet may suspect India collaborating with the “Dalai Clique” and the West to pressure China.



# Sino-Indian Relations...

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- In turn, China may also activate India's internal Security concerns... Maoist and northeast insurgencies. Some of these groups are suspected to be procuring arms from the arms underworld in Yunnan.
- China may also create difficulties for India in its sensitive neighbourhood.



## 6. International Community

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- The unrest in Tibet may bring in Western pressures on India to keep the issue alive and facilitate Tibetan protests.
- US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Dharmshala and meeting with the Dalai Lama has been strongly resented by China.
- Tense Sino-Indian Relations will affect their respective engagements in Asia.



# RESPONSE:

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- The Tibetan unrest puts India in a multi-faceted Dilemma:

*Not to annoy China without appearing to be appeasing it*

*Not to abandon the Tibet cause without appearing to be abating it*

*Neither Petulance Nor Bravado*

*Neither Offence nor Endorsement*



# Response...

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- Within the constraints of this dilemma; the elements of India's Official response have been:
  - (a) Tibetan Protests were broken; "Advised" the Dalai Lama to refrain from "political activities".
  - (b) The Dalai Lama's requests for meetings with the President and the Vice-President were declined.



# Response...

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(c) Smooth transit of Olympic Torch has been assured; though its route has been curtailed to just 3 Kms; partly on the advise of the Chinese side.

(d) Support to Exile Tibetan Government continues.

(e) The Chinese government has been informed that in a democratic country, demonstrations and rallies cannot be stopped.

(f) India asked for negotiations between China and the Dalai Lama to resolve the Tibetan issue peacefully. China's reluctance to engage the Dalai Lama in talks is not understandable.



# Response...

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- China appreciated Indian stand, but also cautioned not to “make” or “take irresponsible words and acts”. Wants India to deal with the Tibet issue on the basis of past agreements.
- India’s response, it has been stated, is based on it’s consistent policy on the Tibet question since 1959.
- Persistence of Tibetan unrest even after the Olympic Games; and any material change in Sino-Indian relations may call for a review of India’s present stance.



THANKS

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FOR YOUR PATIENCE

- S. D. Muni

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