



# Journal of Social and Political Sciences

**Peng, Zhu. (2019), The Impact of the Issue of Exiled Tibetans: Focusing on Sino-Indian Relations. In: *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, Vol.2, No.1, 47-59.**

ISSN 2615-3718

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1991.02.01.47

The online version of this article can be found at:

<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

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# The Impact and Harm of the Issue of Exiled Tibetans: Focusing on Sino-Indian Relations

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## Abstract

As a historical issue, the issue of exiled Tibetans not only worsened Sino-Indian relations in the late 1950s, which resulted in a large-scale war in 1962, but also is to blame for the serious consequence that the successive governments of the two countries have been bearing a grudge against each other ever since, thus unable to reach a genuine reconciliation. At present, with both China and India at a critical stage in their socio-economic development, the radicalization of exiled Tibetans is becoming more and more obvious. The issue of exiled Tibetans has posed a substantial threat to the national security and social stability of the two countries. If this issue cannot be effectively resolved, it is likely to exacerbate Sino-Indian strategic mutual suspicion and even trigger new confrontations and conflicts. In light of this, both countries have to set great store by this issue and come up with a mutually acceptable solution so that the stumbling block between these two countries can be removed once and for all.

**Keywords:** Sino-Indian Relations, Exiled Tibetans, Tibetan Secession, Security Dilemma

## I. Introduction

Recent military confrontations and conflicts in the border areas between China and India worsen the antagonism between the two peoples to such an extent that the Sino-Indian border dispute is often held accountable for the discord between them (Maxwell 1970; Wang 1998; Zhao 2000; Zhang 2004; Zhou 2006; Shang 2009; Kaul 1967; Dalvi 2003; Sandhu 1988; Conley 2001; Amravati 2004). As a matter of fact, the border dispute is merely a superficial phenomenon for the lack of Sino-Indian strategic mutual trust. Both history and reality demonstrate that the culprit for the long-term enmity between China and India is none other than the harboring of exiled Tibetans seeking Tibetan Secession by the Indian government, which sticks obstinately to the security policy of regarding China as its imaginary enemy and taking Tibet as a "buffer state." The issue of exiled Tibetans not only led to an almost complete loss of strategic mutual trust generated in the honeymoon stage in Sino-Indian relations between 1954 and 1958 but also trapped their successive governments into a vicious circle of mutual suspicion and vigilance. Nevertheless, mostly confined to anthropological, ethnological and historiographical explorations, previous studies on this issue have not fully dealt with its impacts on international relations, especially on the Sino-Indian relations (Aziz 1978; Goldstein 1971; Levine 1988; Saklani 1984; Corlin 1991; Logan & Murdie 2016; Ma 2000; Tang 2003; You 2005; Yang 2006; Wang & Zhou 2009; Wu 2012; Li 2014).

At present, with both countries at a critical stage in their socio-economic development, failure to work out an effective resolution to this issue is likely to exacerbate their mutual suspicion and even trigger new confrontations and conflicts. With these two BRICS countries, each having a population larger than one billion and playing a leading role in global economic development, political cooperation benefits both countries while confrontation can only hurt. If they were trapped in an enduring strife of "security dilemma," not only would their socio-economic development be arrested, but global peace and development would also be negatively impacted. In view of this, it is necessary to comb through its origin and development and analyze the impacts that this issue has made and will probably make on the Sino-Indian relations. By proposing a workable solution to the issue, this study is of reference for academia as well as for both countries' policy formulation.

## II. Indian factors in the issue of Exiled Tibetans

The issue of exiled Tibetans can be traced back to the British colonial invasion of Tibet in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, which drove a large number of Tibetans living overseas in exile and thus planted the seeds for long-term discord between China and India. Based on Indian geographic features and the games of hegemony between Britain and Russia in Asia, Britain developed an Indian safety strategy of "one inner lake, two concentric circles and three buffer zones"<sup>1</sup> after its conquest of India in the mid-19th century. Among them, China's Tibet is part of the outer circle as well as of the buffer zones (The compilation group 1993, 9; Conley 2001, 87). In order to materialize this strategic vision, Britain launched the war of aggression against Tibet twice, in 1888 and 1904 respectively, forcing the Qing government to sign a series of unequal treaties and grabbing many privileges. Besides, Britain also unscrupulously provoked clashes between the Han and the Tibetan peoples, masterminded the Simla Conference, concocted the McMahon Line, incited the Tibetan Secession, attempted to split Tibet from China, and turned Tibet into a buffer state under its wings. Due to the resolute resistance from the then Chinese government and people of all nationalities, Britain's attempt did not succeed.

However, after Britain was forced to evacuate from South Asia in 1947, India inherited the colonial legacy of its metropolitan state and continued to adhere to the security strategy of treating China as its potential rival and Tibet as a buffer state (Zhou 2006, 151), and attempted to unilaterally take over Britain's privileges and maintain its illegal border demarcation in Tibet. Upholding the "Indian centralism" left over by Britain, Jawaharlal Nehru, the founding Prime Minister of India, and his government dreamt of developing India not only as an economic and political center both of Southeast Asia and of Central Asia but also as an important participant in the affairs of the Pacific region (Nehru 1946, 547-548). China was never India's neighbor in Nehru's geopolitical blueprint. Tibet would play a role as a buffer state between China and India (Agrawal 2003, 1-2). Therefore, the Indian government, shortly after its independence from Britain, flatly refused the demand from the Kuomintang regime to resume the sovereignty over the land south of the McMahon Line (Maxwell 1970, 69). In order to stress its continuity with Britain in the Tibet-related policy, the Nehru government directly retained Hugh Edward Richardson, the former British-Indian consul to Lhasa, turning him into an Indian consul. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the Chinese Civil War between 1945 and 1949, India instigated the Local Government of Tibet to stage an eviction of the Han people from Tibet and to seek Tibetan Secession. After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, in spite of its overall friendliness towards China based on much deliberation, India was still reluctant to waive the British colonial heritage in Tibet-related privileges and its vested interests on the issue of border, and even went further than Britain (Sandhu 1988, 186). As early as in the Tibetan Peaceful reunification by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950, India did everything possible to obstruct the Chinese government's resumption of sovereignty over Tibet. In its diplomatic notes dated October 21, 28 and November 1, 1950, it denied China's sovereignty over Tibet by such wordings as "China-Tibetan relations" and "Chinese suzerainty", referred to the PLA's military action as "Chinese invasion on Tibet" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MOFA of PRC 1960, 31-42), and threatened not to support PRC's membership at the United Nations (UN) and "not to persuade the Tibetan delegation to go to Beijing" (MOFA of PRC 1957, 180). Afterwards, India wantonly encroached on the territory over which China claimed sovereignty while Tibet was not totally secured by the PLA. India's "appetite" surpassed the British-Indian government's territorial claim on Tibet in that it once put under its occupation Langjiu, an area which had never

been reached by the British colonialists before (Lamb 1966, 580-581). In addition, the Nehru government acquiesced in the military assistance that the United States provided to the Tibetan separatists by utilizing Indian facilities (Wang 2004), thus becoming indirectly supportive of the Tibetan Secession activities. In 1956, after the Kangba rebellion, India once again interfered in China's internal affairs by stealthily harboring the exiled insurgents. After the Tibetan Rebellion in 1959, India began to offer public support and large-scale harboring to insurgents (Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund 2013, 438-440), thus perpetuating and internationalizing the issue of exiled Tibetans<sup>2</sup>.

Under the long-term incitation and support of Britain and India, the Local Government of Tibet became increasingly estranged from the Central Government of China. In March 1947, the Local Government of Tibet attended the Pan-Asian Conference sponsored by India in the name of an independent country with the support of the Provisional Government of India. In order to gain further recognition from the international community, it even sent a business delegation to lobby the governments of India, the United States, and Britain in the same year. In July 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was about to win the nation-wide victory in the Chinese Civil War, the Local Government of Tibet, instigated by India, on the one hand, staged another eviction of the Han people under the pretence of warding off communists so that the Kuomintang representatives in Tibet were forced to retreat to the hinterland; on the other hand, expedited the procurement of weapons and equipment from India, in preparation for a military confrontation with the reunification led by the Chinese Communist Party. In 1950, faced with the irresistible liberation of Tibet, it was still reluctant to abandon its secession fantasy. It first turned to Britain, India, the United States, and Nepal for help and then, in an attempt to prevent the reunification of China with the help of external forces (Goldstein 1989, 719-720), wrote to the UN on November 7, denouncing the Chinese aggression. Even if forced to accept the peaceful liberation of Tibet after frustration in this attempt, part of Tibetan upper classes did not completely quit their separatist activities. In November 1951, the separatists headed by Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi, by organizing the "People's Congress," flouted the Seventeen Points Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet and prepared to wage an armed rebellion in an attempt to evict the PLA from Tibet. After this conspiracy failed, some insurgents fled to India and continued to engage in the Tibetan Secession activities in Kalimpong along the China-Indian border. In February 1956, a large-scale armed rebellion, plotted by overseas Tibetan Secessionists, broke out in Kangba under the pretext of Han chauvinism characteristic of some officials (Mao 2001, 99) and drastic actions in democratic reforms in some Tibetan areas. In November of the same year, the 14th Dalai Lama stayed in India for a long time after attending the celebrations for the 2,500th anniversary of the Sakyamuni Nirvana and intended to collude with the overseas Tibetan Secession forces to separate Tibet from China. Only after Premier Zhou Enlai's repeated remonstrations did he eventually return to Tibet. In June 1958, the Tibetan Secession armed forces headed by Encuh Kampot Tashi set up Chushi Gangdrug (four-water six-hillock volunteer army) in Lhoka Prefecture, Tibet, and gathered rebel forces for an all-round rebellion.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the Chinese government made various endeavors to maintain national unity as well as ethnic solidarity, such as granting the 10th Panchen Lama and the 14th Dalai Lama exceedingly high political statuses<sup>3</sup>, pushing forward the modernization drive in Tibet, a timely correction of blunders in practical work, and a postponement of reform for six years starting in 1956. Despite these, it still could not curb the separatist activities masterminded by Tibetan secession forces. In March 1959, the Tibetan upper classes launched a full-scale armed rebellion, attempting Tibetan secession. When the rebellion failed, a large number of rebels, monks and ordinary folks followed in Dalai Lama's footsteps and fled to India and other countries, turning into the so-called exiled Tibetans.

### **III. The negative impact of the issue of Exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian Relations**

India's overt sympathy for the Tibetan insurgents and its sheltering of large numbers of exiled Tibetans had a profound and long-term impact on China-India relations. The honeymoon period lasting more than four years in the wake of the signing of the *Tibet Agreement* ended abruptly, and the two countries' various contradictions, which were covered up under the slogan of "the Indian people and the Chinese people are brothers", became gradually apparent, even to the point of open hostilities. Failure to bring the issue of exiled Tibetans to a timely

and effective resolution also trapped the successive governments of these two countries into a vicious circle of mutual suspicion and vigilance.

(i) Interrupting the development of Sino-Indian friendship, the issue of exiled Tibetans made their relations take a sharp downward turn. In the early 1950s, faced with diplomatic isolation, economic blockade, and military encirclement by US-led Western bloc, China was in a disadvantaged position in the international community. In contrast, India, exercising capitalism, enjoyed a relatively harmonious relation with the Western countries and was even regarded as a shop window of democracy in Asia. At the same time, the Nehru government, by pursuing the non-alignment neutral policy, carried quite a widespread clout in the Third World. During this period, India gave China a lot of help through its influence in international affairs. From 1950 to 1958, the Indian leadership appealed at least thirty times for the resumption of China's membership of the UN (Shang 2009, 16). On the issue of the Korean War, India, adhering to a relatively impartial and neutral position, withstood the pressure of Western countries and objectively protected Chinese legitimate rights and interests. On the Taiwan issue, India not only refused to attend the San Francisco Peace Conference with Japan in September 1951, which effectually intercepted the US's attempt to create "two Chinas" but also reiterated its adherence to the "one China" policy when the situation across the Taiwan Straits was tense, announcing its support for China's recovery of Taiwan islands (Zhang 2002, 129, 130, 140).

Of course, China also provided considerable assistance and support to India when India underwent domestic and international difficulties. India experienced famine and food shortages from 1950 to 1951. Stuck in its own food shortage, China still signed with India six agreements over five years, starting with the first barter agreement on January 1, 1951, and its rice export to India totaling 710 thousand tons (Zhang 2004, 179-180). In April 1954, Premier Zhou Enlai expressed his dissatisfaction with Nehru's exclusion from the Geneva Conference publicly when Nehru was aiming to play a leading role in the Third World and called for the role of India in the maintenance of peace in Asia (Zhao 2000, 42). In August 1955, the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace, the China-India Friendship Association and other organizations held assemblies in Beijing, Shanghai, among other cities, voicing support for India's struggle to recover Goa from Portuguese colonists.

On the whole, characterized with more cooperation than contradiction, Sino-Indian relations took on considerable momentum from 1949 to 1959. Especially mention-worthy is that Sino-Indian relations enjoyed a relatively long honeymoon period after the signing of the *Tibet Agreement* in 1954 and the exchanged visits of the two prime ministers. However, Sino-Indian relations had changed sharply for the worse due to India's overt sympathy for the insurgents and its continuous sheltering of exiled Tibetans after the 1959 Tibetan rebellion<sup>4</sup>. Starting from March 1959, there emerged in India quite a lot of speeches and actions slandering China and interfering in its internal affairs; many political parties went even so far as to establish organizations in support of Tibetan insurgents. Gangs of thugs were allowed to run riots in front of Chinese Embassy and Consulates in India, among which were serious incidents insulting Chinese heads of state (MOFA of PRC 1960, 61). Afterwards, both countries censured each other on the issue of defected Tibetans, putting an end to their four-year honeymoon. In September 1960, India connived at the Dalai Lama's establishing the "Tibetan government-in-exile" in Dharamsala, aggravating Sino-Indian relations.

(ii) The issue of exiled Tibetans undermined their strategic mutual trust and intensified their border disputes. After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, India had to temporarily forego the security strategy of treating Tibet as a buffer country and to reconsider its relationship with China. At that time, India, like China, was mired in a precarious situation both domestically and internationally. Although India was founded earlier than the PRC, the Nehru government was confronted with enormous challenges, having a hard time clearing up the mess left by the British-Indian government. Domestically, not only was India caught in social upheaval, economic stagnation, and meager livelihood, but it also experienced pressure from the alignment of the US and Pakistan and that of Britain and Pakistan through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Baghdad Pact. Furthermore, the support of the United States for Portugal's occupation of Goa made India unable to realize its national unity fully.

Similarly, China not only had to restore and develop its economy but also had to deal with the blockade and suppression from the Western bloc headed by the US. The same experience of fighting against imperialism and colonialism as well as similar difficulties they encountered in internal and external affairs made these two neighboring countries share the need for friendly coexistence and common development. Therefore, in the context of the Cold War, China and India, respectively as the most populous socialist country and the most populous capitalist country, rather than become enemies, cooperated and supported each other in maintaining peace in Indochina, promoting cooperation between Asian and African countries, developing economy and many other international and domestic issues. These contributed to the gradual establishment of strategic mutual trust. In December 1953, with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, first proposed by Premier Zhou Enlai, getting well received in India, Sino-Indian friendship became the main theme of their relations. In spite of their border disputes, both countries still maintained a high strategic mutual trust and agreed to settle these disputes through diplomatic channels.

From September 14, 1956, to February 26, 1960, Prime Minister Nehru and Premier Zhou Enlai successively discussed the border issue of the two countries through 13 letters. The content of these letters indicated that after the Tibetan rebellion, India's antagonist attitude towards China on the issue of exiled Tibetans sparked off a gradual collapse of their former mutual trust and both countries hurled accusations at each other in their dispute on the border issue. China noticed that immediately after the fleeing of large numbers of insurgents to India, the Indian army began to press on towards the eastern part of their border, unilaterally changing the status quo of their border in that they crossed not only the McMahon line, which was marked on the affiliated map in the confidential documents exchanged between Britain and the local government of Tibet, but also the boundary line indicated on the then map of India (MOFA of PRC 1960, 188-189). Thus, the Chinese leadership took a radical turn in its diplomacy with India and its treatment of Nehru (Dai 2016, 248). They reexamined Sino-Indian relations and took strict precautions against military threats from India along the border under dispute.

In August and October 1959, armed conflicts broke out in Langjiu and Kongka Pass, which are located on the eastern and the western sector of their boundary. These two bloodsheds further aggravated their trust crisis. Because the US and the USSR (FRUS 1992, 513-514; Khrushchev 1988, 466) unanimously back India, the animosity between China and India became hard (David Floyd 1964, 72-76; Zhou 258). India became more aggressive on the border issues. In the summer of 1961, it implemented its "Forward Policy" (Sandhu 1988, 131-132), which eventually led to the outbreak of a large-scale border war between the two countries, in the wake of which they entered a long "frozen period" (Sikri 2011).

(iii) The issue of exiled Tibetans sowed seeds of confrontation, resulting in long-term discord between the two countries. After the Tibetan rebellion in 1959, the Nehru government blatantly sheltered the insurgents and overtly accused the Chinese government, causing profound influence for the Sino-Indian relations. From March 17 to April 27, 1959, Nehru discussed Tibetan situation seven times on public occasions successively, expressing his sympathy for Tibetan insurgents and his opposition to the military interference by the Chinese government<sup>5</sup>. In the meantime, India's Ministry of External Affairs violating international practice, distributed through its official channels "Dalai Lama Statement," advocating the Tibetan secession and criticizing the Chinese government. At the same time, some propaganda in India reported the Chinese government's counterinsurgency campaign in Tibet as "the implementation of gangsterism and imperialism" (MOFA of PRC 1960, 61). Large amounts of negative information so quickly intensified the civil society's anti-China sentiment in India that it set off two large-scale anti-China waves from April to September in the same year.

The Chinese government has responded intensely to the words and deeds of the Indian government. March 21, 1959, the Chinese government warned India: "Tibet's counterinsurgency campaign is entirely China's internal affairs, and any external interference will not be allowed; Tibet is part of China, and any attempt to split Tibet from China is doomed to failure." (ibid. 54). Since then, the Chinese government repeatedly protested against India's interference in China's internal affairs through diplomatic channels. *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, and other major media carried quite a few articles and editorials such as *India's Expansionists are not Allowed to Interfere in our Internal Affairs*, *No Violation of China's Sovereignty will be Allowed*, *Warning Against India's*

*Expansionists: Don't Engage in Schemes and Intrigues* to express China's position and sentiment. Nevertheless, China's protests failed to stop India from continuing to host exiled Tibetans. The antagonism against each other gradually evolved into a substantive military confrontation. After India's defeat, exiled Tibetans became its trump card in balancing China. In November 1962, India, in cooperation with CIA of the U.S., recruited young exiled Tibetans and set up a special 10,000 strong border force at a military base close to the Sino-India border. In March 1963, India connived with exiled Tibetans to hold activities in New Delhi to commemorate the 4th anniversary of the Tibetan rebellion, supported the "Tibetan government-in-exile secretly" to announce the "Constitution of the Tibet" and open offices in New York and Geneva. In December 1965, India voted in support of a UN resolution condemning the Chinese government for violating human rights in Tibet. In a word, India repeatedly used the issue of exiled Tibetans as an excuse to force the Chinese government to make concessions on the border dispute (Qiu, 2016). As a result, China is more skeptical about India.

Although their relations gradually thawed and developed in a positive direction after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took the initiative to express her willingness for a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian dispute on January 1, 1969, these two countries were hard pressed to achieve genuine reconciliation since the successive governments of India were reluctant to waive the "trump card" of exiled Tibetans. Even to this day, the issue of exiled Tibetans is still a huge obstacle between China and India, not only affecting a complete settlement of their border disputes but also triggering waves of new disputes and conflicts.

#### **IV. The harm of the issue of Exiled Tibetans to China and India in reality**

Since its emergence in 1959, the issue of exiled Tibetans has been making trouble for both countries for nearly sixty years. However, this does not mean that its resolution can be postponed indefinitely. Taking into account their international and domestic situations as well as the reality of exiled Tibetans, both countries deem it not only necessary but also urgent to come up with an early resolution.

(i) For China, this issue is a non-negligible obstacle inhibiting its peaceful development both domestically and internationally. At present, China is vigorously pushing forward its Silk and Belt Initiative, and a stable and peaceful environment is even more important. However, the troubles that the Tibetan secessionists headed by Dalai Lama have frequently made both at home and abroad constitute quite a few obstacles for China's peaceful development. On the one hand, the Dalai clique has constantly created negative public opinion in the world, which has seriously damaged China's national image. Over the years, the Dalai Lama often steals into different countries, slandering the Chinese government and canvassing support for his secessionist schemes in the disguise of religion. The Dalai clique's offices in the United States, Switzerland, Britain, Japan, and other countries carry out all year round anti-China propaganda and organize various anti-China activities. On the other hand, the Tibetan secessionists have colluded with other separatist forces, thus jeopardizing China's national unity and ethnic solidarity. Under the incitation and pairing of the Western anti-China forces, The Dalai clique successively collaborated with other separatist forces under the banners of Taiwan Secession, Xinjiang Secession, Hong Kong Secession, and even the Falun Gong Cult, to wreak havoc on China's national security.

The Tibetan secessionist forces continuously engage in infiltration and destruction in the disguise of religious and cultural exchanges, exerting a direct impact on the stability and development of the Tibet Autonomous Region. China and India are connected by mountains and rivers, thus even in the "frozen period" of Sino-Indian relations, people-to-people exchanges were not forbidden. The Tibetan secessionists spared no effort to spread rumors, instigate riots, and create violent incidents by making use of their inextricable links with Tibetans in China, which had made great damage to Tibet's stability and prosperity. In 2008, the Tibetan secessionists once again staged an appalling March 14 incident of beating, smashing, looting and burning, killing 18 innocent civilians and causing a direct property loss of RMB 250 million. After that, Tibetan independence fanatics successively plotted and implemented a number of self-immolation incidents in public at home and abroad, and spread them around through the Internet, audio and video products and other media to create an atmosphere of terror. In order to induce more Tibetans to immolate themselves, the Dalai clique explicitly listed the self-immolators as the so-called "national heroes" at the second "Special Conference of Global Exiled Tibetans" held

in 2012. In addition, Lhamo Kyab, who used to serve as a member of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, also wrote a guidebook to self-immolation, systematically instigating the Tibetans to burn themselves. The Dalai clique flagrantly used extreme violence such as killing innocents and self-immolation as a means to achieve its political objectives. It was no different from a terrorist organization and constituted a real threat to the social stability of China.

The reason why the Tibetan separatist forces can be so rampant is inseparable from India's support and connivance. Since the Tibetan Rebellion in 1959, India has long regarded the exiled Tibetans as an important pawn impeding China. It has been secretly supporting and conniving at the exiled Tibetans' staging incidents inside and outside China in order to achieve different political purposes. Although China has taken precautions against India, it has not seen it as the most important strategic rival. After the Cold War was over, the strategic pressure on China mainly came from the US. Geopolitically, China put its strategic emphasis on its east and south and prioritized the resolution of the Taiwan issue, territorial disputes, and safety in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, as well as the Korean Peninsula. In order to maintain the relative stability in the southwest of China, The Chinese government actively improved its relations with India. The two countries successively signed a series of bilateral agreements such as *the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas*, *the Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas*, and *the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the Boundary Question*. However, because the Indian government stuck to an anti-China position on the issue of exiled Tibetans, China and India have been unable to disregard the previous enmity and rebuild strategic mutual trust. After Modi came to power in 2014, the Indian government was once more radical in its China policy. His government not only deliberately keeps creating tensions on border areas such as Doklam and Bangong Lake with an aim to blackmail China, but also openly provocative to China by inviting the Dalai Lama to visit the pseudo "Arunachal Pradesh" and instigating Lobsang Sangay, the leader of the "Tibetan Government-in-exile", to claim sovereignty over the Bangong Lake by planting flags there. For the Chinese government, it can be seen that postponing the resolution of this issue not only seriously affects China's international image and domestic stability, but also directly threatens China's national security and territorial integrity, leading to endless scourge.

(ii) For India, the issue of exiled Tibetans, producing increasingly negative effects, has become a drag on its development and stability. India, according to its own needs, has used this issue to hector China from time to time and has indeed achieved some "gains" which caused a lot of trouble in China. However, there are two sides to everything, and this issue is not always beneficial to India. As China grows stronger, its negative impact on India's international status and social stability is becoming more and more obvious.

First of all, China's countermeasures tortured India. Needless to say, in the face of all kinds of troubles caused by India's use of the issue of exiled Tibetans, it is impossible for the Chinese government to be inactive and passive for a long time. The strategic competition is not temporary, and the Chinese government is good at adopting the tactic of "you fight yours, and I fight mine" promoted by Chairman Mao during the Liberation War to cope with a variety of international challenges. A famous strategic analyst in India, C. Raja Mohan warned that China would let the Indian government pay for its double-dealing on the issue of exiled Tibetan and border disputes. In recent years, India has recently kept complaining that it is unable to materialize its ambition of becoming a major world power since China set obstacles on its bid for permanent membership of the UN Security Council and membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). If it continues to provoke China on the issue of exiled Tibetans in the future, India will surely encounter more severe countermeasures from China.

Secondly, the lack of strategic mutual trust resulting from this issue gradually traps India into a security dilemma. Despite frequent high-level visits and improvement in bilateral relations since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988, the protracted issue of exiled Tibetans has made it impossible for the two countries to put down their historical burdens completely and achieve a high level of mutual trust. In order to hedge against China, on the one hand, India crazily engages in military expansion and war preparation, building the largest mountain combat force in the world and so-called Asia's first, world's second aircraft carrier formation and imagining that



in the possible future wars, the Chinese army will be attacked from both the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, while maintaining its traditional relations with Russia, India is also actively wooing the US and trying to join the "democratic security diamond" advocated by Shinzo Abe and formed by the United States, Japan, Australia and India, with an attempt to implement a strategic encirclement of China with the help of the US-led external forces. Such "efforts," instead of enhancing its security, spur China's national defense construction in its southwest. Trapped in chancery, India has to increase its military input further. However, with the territory being a third of that of China and its GDP only one-fifth of China's in 2017, continuing to expand defense spending will only plunge it into a state of exhaustion, even of disaster.

Finally, the increasingly prominent radicalization of exiled Tibetans presents India with a Frankensteinian monster. Although the Dalai clique has always claimed to strive for Tibetan Secession through peaceful means, it has never abandoned the use of violence to achieve its political goals. Since the armed rebellion in the 1950s, there have been numerous incidents of self-immolation, riots, and looting and burning created by the Tibetan secessionist forces. With the Tibetan Youth Congress, the Tibetan Women's Association and other radicalized Tibetan secessionist organizations growing stronger and insubordinate, terrorists' trend of thought advocating violence spread like wildfire among exiled Tibetans. Ironically, ever since its independence seventy years ago, India has never completely resolved its own domestic troubles such as ethnic and religious conflicts and several local secessions. Riots and armed conflicts thus arising are common occurrences. If the Indian government gives free rein to the radicalized Tibetan secessionist organizations, the terrorism that they advocate is very likely to affect the local separatist forces in India, triggering even graver social upheavals and threatening its national unity.

(iii) In light of the reality of exiled Tibetans, economic poverty, political despair, and religious alienation are making them more extreme. First, the poor living conditions have made ordinary exiled Tibetans more dependent on the Tibetan secessionist forces. Since the 1960s, India has set up dozens of settlements in the Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and other places to accommodate exiled Tibetans. Although the settlements have established farms, handicraft workshops, and educational, medical and other facilities, they have limited resources and poor conditions. The exiled Tibetans living here can only maintain basic survival, and many of them still live below the poverty line now. In order to get out of trouble, more and more exiled Tibetans are trying to migrate to other countries. In recent years, the issue of population loss in the settlements has aroused great concern of the Dalai clique, and the "Tibetan Government-in-exile" has begun to restrict the relocation of Tibetans by means of personal control, religious intimidation and cultural segregation, leading to increasing poverty of exiled Tibetans and growing dependence of poor exiled Tibetans on the Tibetan secessionist forces.

Second, the disillusionment of the political fantasy has enabled the radicals to take the lead. After the rebellion in Tibet, the Dalai clique has been deceiving and controlling ordinary exiled Tibetans by distorting history, denying China's sovereignty over Tibet, inciting ethnic hatred and advocating violent Tibetan Secession. In the 1970s, with the improvement of Sino-US relations, the United States not only interrupted all kinds of aid to exiled Tibetans but also acquiesced Nepal government army to annihilate Chushi Gangdrug which has been entrenched in the Mustang for many years. Affected by this, the Dalai clique adjusted its tactics accordingly, put forward the so-called Middle Way and declared that it would establish a Tibet with high-degree autonomy and genuine autonomy through peaceful means. Since 2002, the Dalai Lama has sent his private representatives to negotiate with the central government ten times, creating a false impression of compromise. However, his fantasy of establishing a state within a state is nothing less than an idiotic dream, which has been severely criticized by the central government. After the disillusionment of the political fantasy, the Dalai clique began to enable the radicals who advocated violent Tibetan Secession on a large scale, resulting in the Tibetan secessionist extremist forces' gradual control of the overall trend of exiled Tibetans.

Third, the variations in religious beliefs have accelerated the radicalization of exiled Tibetans. Tibetan Buddhism is both the main religious belief of the Tibetans and an important part of the traditional Tibetan culture. Like Buddhism spread all over the world, Tibetan Buddhism not only stresses mercy but also takes Nonkilling as its basic discipline. However, the Dalai clique has advocated violent Tibetan Secession, incited riots and abetted

self-immolation to achieve its political objectives. In addition, the Dalai clique continues to wrest the Tibetan Buddhist doctrines and fabricate the heretical ideas in order to exercise spiritual control over exiled Tibetans. In fact, the "Tibetan Buddhism" advocated by the Dalai clique has run counter to the doctrines of Buddhism and become a tool for Tibetan secessionist forces to do demagoguery. Especially after the representative of Tibetan secessionist radicals and the leader of Tibetan Youth Congress Lobsang Sangay took charge of the religio-political "Tibetan Government-in-exile," Tibetan secessionist forces paid more attention to making use of religion to spread extremist ideas among exiled Tibetans. As a result of this, the radicalization process of exiled Tibetans has accelerated markedly. If this trend is not contained in time, the issue of exiled Tibetans will pose a greater threat to the national security and social stability of China and India.

#### **V. The way to resolve the issue of exiled Tibetans**

The issue of exiled Tibetans, as a historical legacy, has been troubling both the Chinese and the India governments for several decades. However, it is by no means a deadlock. In the summer of 2017, the Donglang confrontation once again intensified tensions between two countries, putting their relations at a historical crossroads once again. A smooth resolution of this issue has significant bearings on both sides. Of course, its resolution is a fairly complicated task, which cannot be accomplished just by unilateral willingness and efforts. In removing this stumbling block, both sides must reach a consensus and actively cooperate with each other.

For China, the resolution of this issue can be conducted through the following steps. Firstly, China should make some concessions to India in order to secure its termination of support to Tibetan secessionists. As the headquarters of the exiled Tibetans and a forward position for its anti-China separatist activities, India is an unsurpassable key link in the resolution of this issue. Exploiting its own international status and national influence, China can reach an exchange of interests (Li & Ma 2008) with India on India's major concerns, such as its bid for a permanent membership of the UN Security Council, its accession to the NSG and the resolution of Kashmir conflict, so as to procure India's cooperation and support on the resolution of the issue of exiled Tibetans.

Secondly, it should bring into full play nongovernmental forces to win the support of the majority and split exiled Tibetans from within. As a special community originating from the Tibet Autonomous Region, these people lack a national identity with the Chinese people; they live abroad but are still in close touch with inland Tibetans. Therefore, besides deploying governmental forces, the Chinese government should closely cooperate with non-governmental organizations (NGO) to establish a larger friends' circle in opposition to Tibetan secession forces. In this way, the Chinese government can exert its influence on exiled Tibetans via different channels so that the stubborn can be isolated; the blind followers can be checked, and the onlookers can be won over.

Thirdly, China should seek understanding and support from the international community. The Dalai Lama has long been confusing the international community by accusing the Chinese government of "violating Tibetans' human rights," "plundering Tibet's resources and destroying its ecology," "destroying religions," "committing genocide," and so on (Tang 2003, 409-443). This generates prejudices against the Chinese government in the international community. In order to eliminate these prejudices, the Chinese government needs to strengthen its communication with the international community and gradually obtain its support, so that it can reverse the passive situation and stem the support of relevant countries to Tibetan Secession forces.

Lastly, China should take precautions for the resettlement of exiled Tibetans. In the late 1980s, due to their misjudgment of the situation, the Dalai Clique missed the opportunity to return home. Since then, many people do not cherish the hope that one day the Dalai Lama and exiled Tibetans will return home. That is why the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region has made no preparation for the resettlement of large numbers of returned exiled Tibetans. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Dalai Clique get a clear understanding of the situation and strike out on a new course. Once the Dalai Lama changes his mind and returns home, a large number of exiled Tibetans are sure to follow in his footsteps. At that time, poor resettlement is

likely to cause such serious contradictions and conflicts that some of the returnees will go abroad once again. In that case, what has been done will be in vain, and this issue will be even more difficult to rein in.

As for India, its primary task in resolving this issue is to change its inappropriate security strategy. It has been proved that such a security strategy, though harming China, has brought no benefit for itself. It not only impedes the normalization of Sino-Indian relations but also jeopardizes its national security and social stability. Since the end of the Cold War, peace and development have become the main themes of the world. As the world's second most populous country and the country with the largest number of poor people in the world, India should undoubtedly prioritize its economic development. However, since Modi came to power, India's anti-China forces started to gain its ground and successively create tensions along the Sino-Indian border like Donglang, the Bangong Lake and other places. At the same time, they use exiled Tibetans as a pawn to provoke China. Jaitley, India's Defense Minister, even arrogantly claimed that "India of 2017 is different from India of 1962."<sup>6</sup> Of course, China is also different from what it was in 1962 and the gap in comprehensive national strength between China and India today is even larger than that in 1962. If India sticks to its outdated security strategy of taking China as its strategic rival, fiercer conflicts and confrontations will sure be triggered. Therefore, to get rid of exiled Tibetans by adjusting its relevant strategies will be the best choice for India to make in following the historical trend and improving its relations with China.

On this basis, India can resolve this issue in two aspects. First, it should adjust its Tibet-related policies, decisively quit its support for Tibetan Secession forces and help exiled Tibetans return to the motherland. No country in the world recognizes the "Tibetan Government-in-exile." Besides, the international community is becoming more vigilant about the radicalization tendency of the Tibetan Secession forces. India's retaining and supporting the Tibetan Secession forces are obviously against the international mainstream. Quite a lot of political figures and ordinary people inside India keep protesting against the government's long-term maintaining a "foreign government." From a humanitarian standpoint, the Indian government has the duty to help those exiled Tibetans who are willing to return to their homeland to pursue a better life because most of exiled Tibetans have been living in poverty in the past nearly 60 years since the Tibetan Rebellion in 1959. Once the Indian government ceases supporting and retaining the Tibetan Secession forces, the "Tibetan government-in-exile" is bound to rot from within, and a smooth resolution of the issue of exiled Tibetans can be expected.

India's secondary task in resolving this issue is to amend its relevant laws and make proper arrangements for some exiled Tibetans to settle down in India. The Indian government has been treating exiled Tibetans like refugees. However, India neither signed the UN's Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and Protocol on the *Status of Refugees* of 1967 nor has specific laws dealing with refugees. In dealing with exiled Tibetans, India is still using the *Foreigners Act* left by British colonists. This act mainly regulates the residence and movement of foreigners in India and lacks articles protecting the rights of refugees and their descendants. In the past nearly 60 years, exiled Tibetans have multiplied for three or four generations. Although these Tibetan descendants were born and raised in India, their parents are still illegal immigrants, who cannot obtain the nationality of India according to India's *Citizenship Act*. After the future disintegration of the "Tibetan Government-in-exile," some exiled Tibetans will continue to stay in India because they have no experience of living in China's Tibetan Autonomous Region. In this regard, India needs to think ahead and to provide them with legal protection so that they can strike root in India, thus avoiding triggering further social problems.

## Conclusion

As a historical legacy, the issue of exiled Tibetans has been troubling both China and India for nearly six decades. It is not only a heavy burden on both sides but also a serious impediment to the normal development of Sino-Indian relations. In the final analysis, Britain's colonial invasion of China's Tibet is the root of this issue and the crux of the matter is that India, indiscriminately inheriting legacies from British colonists, stubbornly sticks to the security strategy of treating China as its potential enemy, which was formulated by the British-Indian government, and keeps retaining exiled Tibetans and supporting their Tibetan separatist activities. In recent years, India, by taking this issue as a pawn, repeatedly challenged China's bottom line on border disputes

and other related international issues, putting Sino-Indian relations at a crossroads once again. If India continues to adhere to its erroneous security strategy stubbornly and fails to make an informed decision on the issue of exiled Tibetans, then mutual suspicion between China and India will be intensified, and new confrontations and conflicts are likely to be triggered.

Undoubtedly, there will be no victor in their hostility. This is a point about which both sides must be sober. Now and in the foreseeable future, both countries are at a critical stage of striding across the middle-income trap in their socio-economic development, both countries are in urgent demand for a peaceful international environment and a stable domestic situation to realize their economic ambitions, be it China's Silk and Belt Initiative or India's Look-East Strategy, Monsoon Plan, or Spices Road. If they were trapped in enduring strife of security dilemma on account of this issue, not only would their development be arrested, but global peace and development would also be negatively impacted. Therefore, whether domestically or internationally, both China and India have to set great store by the issue of exiled Tibetans, reach a consensus at an early date, and come up with a mutually acceptable solution so that the stumbling block between these two countries can be removed once and for all.

### Notes

1. The "one inner lake" refers to the Indian Ocean. The "two concentric circles" refer to the inner circle of tribal areas in the northwestern border of India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, the Assam State and tribal areas in the northeastern border of India, and the outer circle of Emirates in the Persian Gulf, Persia, Afghanistan, China's Tibet, and Thailand. The "three buffer zones" refer to China's Tibet becoming subject to British management, which would guarantee India was "free from the China threat"; the Indian Ocean Rim, with the aim of bringing "countries along the coasts of the Indian Ocean under British control"; and Afghanistan, which was expected to keep Czarist Russia away from the British holdings.

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