



# The assimilationist turn in Tibet policy in the Xi Jinping era

By *Matthew Akester*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The People's Republic of China (PRC) has dialled back the nominal autonomy guaranteed to its Tibetan areas in the 1982 constitution, through the suppression of the language, religion, and an influx of Han Chinese immigrants.
- The PRC views the assertion of its claims to the right of approving the next Dalai Lama as its most significant remaining challenge in Tibet.
- The United Kingdom (UK) should call on the PRC to allow Tibetan-medium education, end the forcible relocation of Tibetans, and grant Tibetans the same rights as other Chinese citizens in access to passports and foreign travel.



**A**fter the People's Republic of China (PRC) annexed Tibet by military invasion between 1949 and 1951, it initially pursued a policy of accommodation with Tibetan elites, promising national autonomy based on the Soviet model. By the mid-1950s, having secured greater military and administrative control of the plateau, and international quiescence regarding its occupation, 'socialist reforms' were introduced in the 'Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures' (TAPs) of eastern Tibet, sparking resistance that was crushed brutally. The spread of resistance to central Tibet – the domain of the Lhasa government, later designated as the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) – led to the flight of the Dalai Lama in March 1959, and imposition of 'reforms' throughout. Between 1959 and 1979, Tibet's traditional social order, dominated by the monastic system, was almost entirely destroyed. Most educated Tibetans were killed or imprisoned, and much of the population reduced to poverty under the commune system.

In the post-Mao era, under the 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the 'national autonomy' system was reinstated in Tibet, nominally allowing for political representation as well as the tolerance of Tibetan language, religion and culture. Although the cadre force became Tibetanised to some extent, few Tibetans achieved positions of real power – there has never been an ethnic Tibetan secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Party Committee, which is part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, monasteries were restored under state oversight, Tibetan language education was permitted, and restrictions on immigration from the PRC were imposed. Following nationalist unrest in Lhasa between 1987 and 1989, these liberalised policies were curtailed. Immigration controls were removed, leading to an influx of Han Chinese settlers, and a state-subsidised infrastructure and urbanisation boom transformed the plateau landscape. The 'national autonomy' system remained in place nominally, but severe restrictions were imposed on religious life. Other expressions of Tibetan identity and aspirations were identified as dissent by an increasingly securitised state.

Taking even greater effect this century, the PRC's massive expansion of transport infrastructure, urbanisation and economic activity in its western regions, as well as outbreaks of protest (2008 in Tibet, 2009 in Xinjiang), have spurred PRC nationalists to call for the withdrawal of the 'nationality autonomy' system, which allows for some measure of protection for ethnic identity and language.<sup>1</sup> While the central leadership has ignored calls for its abolition, current policies such as 'forging a common Chinese community' [中华民族共同体] and

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<sup>1</sup> Ma Rong, 'Reflections on the debate on China's ethnic policy: my reform proposals and their critics', *Asian Ethnicity*, 15:2 (2014) and 第二胡鞍钢 胡联合 [Hu Angang and Hu Lianhe], '代民族政策: 促进民族交融一体和繁荣一体' ['The second generation of ethnic policies: Promoting ethnic integration and prosperity'], 北京大学 [Peking University], 11/05/2018, <http://www.shehui.pku.edu.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



‘sinicisation of religion’ [宗教中国化], along with the requirement that ethnic minority citizens ‘promote the unity of nationalities’ [促进民族团结], indicate that the system no longer has force.<sup>2</sup> The developments in Tibet described in this primer are particularly intense, but consistent with the CCP’s central policy for all the PRC’s minority regions.

## Grassroots control

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The CCP’s longer-term response to the 2008 uprising, which swept through many rural areas of eastern Tibet, was to extend its presence and control down to the village level. In the TAR, since 2011, teams of officials have been stationed in every village, supposedly to assist with development projects, but also to strengthen local CCP organisations and their political education work.<sup>3</sup> Monastery management committees were replaced and staffed with party-appointed officials, and must also host work teams. The digitally-assisted neighbourhood surveillance systems introduced in urban areas of Tibet at that time, known as ‘grid management’ and ‘double-linked household’ networks (see Box 1), have been gradually extended to rural areas.<sup>4</sup> Both systems complement the broader ‘sharp eyes’ [雪亮工程] initiative, which aims to achieve comprehensive and integrated surveillance across urban and rural areas.

### Box 1: The ‘grid management’ and ‘double-linked household’ networks

‘Grid management’ [社会网格化管理], or ‘grid-style social management’, is a neighbourhood surveillance system. It breaks residential areas into grids, usually 100 square metres or less, each with one or more

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<sup>2</sup> James Leibold, ‘A family divided: the CCP’s ethnic work conference’, The Jamestown Foundation, 07/11/2014, <https://jamestown.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘China’s Communist Party Formally Embraces Assimilationist Approach to Ethnic Minorities’, *Wall Street Journal*, 08/10/2024, <https://www.wsj.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>3</sup> ‘西藏自治区将全面启动两万余名干部下基层活动’ [‘The Tibet Autonomous Region will fully launch grassroots activities with more than 20,000 cadres’], 新华 [Xinhua], 10/10/2011, <https://www.gov.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>4</sup> ‘China: Alarming new surveillance, security in Tibet’, Human Rights Watch, 20/03/2013 <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



monitors reporting directly to local police and government authorities, and linked to surveillance CCTV cameras and police databases.

The 'double-linked household' [双联户] network is a neighbourhood security management system in which every five (urban) or ten (rural) households are represented by a foreperson who reports directly to local police and government authorities on the movements and behaviour of individuals under their watch. 'Double-linked' refers to the dual function of promoting security and economic welfare.

## 'Ethnic mingling'

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At the Central Ethnic Work Conference held in Beijing in September 2014, new policies and practices for breaking down the autonomy and identity of minority peoples were launched at the national level. 'Maintaining social stability', a euphemism for the preemptive policing of dissent, was joined in official usage by 'promoting the unity of nationalities', a euphemism for the policing of ethnic tension, reflecting the increasing numbers of Chinese people coming to live, work or travel in Tibet.<sup>5</sup> 'Ethnic mingling' became the guiding principle of policy in minority regions: more Tibetans going to the mainland for schooling, training and employment, and more Chinese coming to visit and work in Tibet, were supposed to overcome exceptionalism and 'backwardness', and to enable Tibetan participation in the mainstream economy.<sup>6</sup> The 'hukou' [户口] household registration system of the PRC was being liberalised, simplifying procedures for non-Tibetans to become residents.<sup>7</sup> Domestic tourism has become the region's main service industry, with official figures for annual arrivals exceeding at least ten times over the total population of the plateau.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 'New regulations on ethnic unity officially depart from preferential ethnic policies', International Campaign for Tibet, 12/02/2020, <https://savetibet.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>6</sup> 'China's "Bilingual Education" Policy in Tibet', Human Rights Watch, 04/03/2020, <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and James Leibold, 'Xinjiang Work Forum marks new policy of Ethnic Mingling', The Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>7</sup> 'TAR regulations on service and management of floating population', China Tibet Network, 22/01/2022, <https://ti.tibet3.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and '西藏与川渝黔实现户籍迁移“跨省通办”' ['Tibet and Sichuan, Chongqing and Guizhou have implemented "inter-provincial procedures" for household registration transfer'], 西藏日报 [Tibet Daily], 19/11/2021, <http://xz.people.com.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>8</sup> Simon Denyer and Congcong Zhang, 'China's Tibet tourism statistics just don't add up', *The Washington Post*, 06/11/2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

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## Language and education

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If the ‘nationality autonomy’ system fell far short of allowing the PRC’s minority people’s political autonomy in the internationally accepted sense, the constitutional guarantee of their distinct identities, particularly the right to education in their own languages, has long been seen as a bottom line of protection against assimilation.<sup>9</sup> In the TAR, state education has always been in Chinese-language medium at the secondary level and above, while Tibetan-medium middle schools were established in the TAPs of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces from the 1980s. From the early 2000s, official policy began to prioritise Chinese language, and the Chinese medium was introduced at the primary education level in urban areas. The Qinghai government’s announcement of a shift to Chinese-medium teaching in 2010 provoked mass student protests. From 2014, in keeping with the ‘ethnic mingling’ policy, mandarin Chinese was re-named the ‘national common language’, and its promotion in minority regions required by the central leadership.<sup>10</sup> In the same period, pre-school education became effectively mandatory in Tibetan areas and hundreds of ‘bilingual kindergartens’ were constructed, where three to six year-olds received early exposure to Chinese language and state propaganda.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, it was made explicit that Chinese was to be the language of instruction at all levels, including pre-school in minority regions, and by 2023 most of the TAPs had formally announced the phasing out of Tibetan-medium teaching in the formal education system of government schools.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, through the

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<sup>9</sup> ‘The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China’, The State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 20/11/2019 (Updated), <https://english.www.gov.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>10</sup> Starting with the 2000 NCL law ‘NCL’ gradually became the standard term in official usage during the 2010s. See: ‘Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of the People’s Republic of China’, Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 21/07/2009, <http://en.moe.gov.cn/Resources/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>11</sup> ‘China’s “Bilingual Education” Policy in Tibet’, Human Rights Watch, 04/03/2020 <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>12</sup> 谢沂楠 [Xie Yanan], ‘教育部办公厅关于实施学前儿童普通话教育“童语同音”计划的通知’ [‘Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on the Implementation of the “Children’s Homophone” Program for Mandarin Education for Preschool Children’], 教育部办公厅 [General Office of the Ministry of Education], 23/07/2021, [www.moe.gov.cn/](http://www.moe.gov.cn/) (checked: 14/05/2024) and ‘China enforces compulsory Mandarin Chinese learning for preschool children in Tibet’, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 17/09/2021, <https://tchrd.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025); and Tenzin Dickyi, ‘Prefecture in Qinghai to drastically cut Tibetan language education’, *Radio Free Asia*, 16/05/2019, <https://www.rfa.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025); ‘Ngaba highlights erosion of Tibetan language instruction’, International Campaign for Tibet, 28/04/2020, <https://savetibet.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025); ‘China’s rubber-stamp parliament declares use of minority languages “unconstitutional”’, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 27/01/2021, <https://tchrd.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘China bans Tibetan language in schools in Sichuan province’, *Radio Free Asia*, 17/10/2023, <https://www.rfa.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



promotion of the ‘national common language’ government campaign, virtually everyone is required to study and acquire competence in the Chinese language (from monks to ordinary villagers) and in the case of government officials down to the lowest levels, it is compulsory and tested.<sup>13</sup>

## Rural economy

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Under the nationwide poverty alleviation campaign that lasted from 2016 to 2020 and other drives, hundreds of thousands of rural Tibetans were relocated, often losing their former livelihood, and recruited for vocational training to qualify them for off-farm work.<sup>14</sup> Rural production was reorganised into cooperatives, usually run by local CCP officials, with the objective of marketising rural goods and services, opening rural areas to the employment and settlement of outsiders, and equipping rural Tibetans with the skills required for integration in the mainland economy.<sup>15</sup> Digitisation and the increased presence of the state at village level enabled mass data collection (including bio-data) and security monitoring of previously remote and economically semi-sufficient populations.<sup>16</sup> Increasing dependence of rural Tibetans on state benefits, including housing and employment, focused pressure on them to comply with state ideological and securitisation objectives. This approach has continued since 2020 under the rural revitalisation strategy: despite official claims of increased incomes and improved facilities, its main achievement appears to be building greater capacity for state presence, oversight and control at grassroots level.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 袁伟 [Yuan Wei], ‘“十四五”时期加强民族地区国家通用语言文字教育的政策思考’ [‘Policy reflections on strengthening national common language education in ethnic minority areas during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period’], 中国民族教育 [Chinese Ethnic Education], 22/08/2021 <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>14</sup> Cao Bin, Cheng Lu and Zhang Jingpin, ‘Relocation changing lives on Tibetan plateau’, *Xinhua*, 20/06/2018, [www.xinhuanet.com/](http://www.xinhuanet.com/) (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘200,000 nomads and farmers relocated in less than four years in Qinghai’, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 02/11/2019, <https://tchrd.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>15</sup> ‘Summary explanation of Central Government Document No.1’, *Qinghai Tibetan News*, 06/03/2022, <http://www.jmjzjy.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘China’s poverty alleviation programs impoverishing Tibetan nomads’, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 19/06/2019, <https://tchrd.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>16</sup> ‘New evidence of mass DNA collection in Tibet’, *Human Rights Watch*, 05/09/2022 <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>17</sup> ‘Rural revitalization strategy implemented - farming villages take on a new look’, *Tibet Daily*, 23/06/2021, <http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).





## Civil society

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From 2014, authorities in Tibetan areas began to denounce local initiatives on issues such as environmental protection and preserving Tibetan language as ‘illegal organisations’. The attack on civil society was formalised by the nationwide anti-gang crime campaign (from 2018 to 2020) which, in Tibet, targeted social activity not organised by the state – especially local resistance to land grabs, mining, official corruption, and language loss.<sup>18</sup> Citizens were offered cash rewards for informing on their neighbours and colleagues, a familiar means of eroding community solidarity. The campaign was considered so successful that its objectives were made a permanent branch of police work in 2021.<sup>19</sup>

## ‘Sinicisation’ of religion

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In 2016, a nationwide campaign was launched for the ‘sinicisation’ of religion, meaning that religious groups had to renounce foreign influence and accept the primacy of state authority.<sup>20</sup> The management of monasteries has been a key priority for the CCP in the post-Mao era, and restrictions on religious activity are intensive, especially in TAR.<sup>21</sup> Its United Front Work Department (UFWD) organisations cultivate compliant lamas and senior monks as intermediaries, but the lack of credible Tibetan religious figures endorsing the Party’s legitimacy presents a long-term obstacle.

‘Sinicisation’ in Tibet addresses these challenges with a bold vision of full state intervention in Buddhist monasteries and organisations, and the systematic cultivation of a monastic elite that is both qualified in religious study and committed to the CCP’s ideological and political aims – often expressed as ‘the adaptation of Buddhism to socialist society’. Institutes of Higher Buddhist Studies established in each Tibetan-inhabited province are charged with defining academic standards, compiling standard textbooks, and training the religious

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<sup>18</sup> “‘Illegal Organisations’: China’s crackdown on Tibetan social groups”, Human Rights Watch, 30/07/2018, <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>19</sup> Jeremy Daum, ‘Saohei and the draft organised crime law’, *China Law Translate*, 29/01/2021, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>20</sup> 牟钟鉴 [Mou Zhongjian], ‘我国宗教应坚持中国化方向’ [‘Religion in our country should adhere to the direction of Sinicisation’], 人民网 [People’s Daily], 01/07/2016, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>21</sup> ‘Tibet 2022 International Religious Freedom Report’, Department of State (US), 15/05/2023, <https://www.state.gov/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



leaders and teachers of the future.<sup>22</sup> Permission to teach Buddhism is already restricted to graduates of these institutes or holders of state-awarded certificates. These teachers are required to emphasise aspects of Buddhism considered compatible with socialist values, such as patriotism, moral conduct and social service. General monastic education includes instruction in patriotism and law, and now Chinese language, for which monks and nuns in management positions and monastery-based officials are made responsible.<sup>23</sup>

Education on the ‘harmful aspects of religion’, emphasising the wastefulness of material offerings and the supposed irrationality of spiritual renunciation, rather than pursuing prosperity and happiness ‘in the present life’, has been made a part of regular political education for the general public, especially in schools.<sup>24</sup>

## Reincarnation regulation

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The PRC laid the groundwork for asserting control of the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation in 1995, when it ‘disappeared’ the Dalai Lama’s chosen candidate for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama and imposed its own candidate, despite opposition from Tibetan Buddhists and the international community. By 2007, legal measures for the official recognition of reincarnate lamas were in place, specifying that none could be recognised without state approval. Revisions in 2022 added that only candidates born within the PRC were eligible.<sup>25</sup>

The 14th Dalai Lama turns 89 years old this year, and his impending demise is seen by Beijing as its most significant remaining challenge in Tibet. Perhaps the main purpose of stationing work teams in monasteries since 2011 has been to contain the threats to ‘stability’ anticipated at that ‘critical moment’, and this appears to be the case with the village-based work teams too. More recently, ‘education’ meetings on the reincarnation law have been stepped up; officials

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Party above Buddhism: China’s surveillance and control of Tibetan monasteries and nunneries’, *International Campaign for Tibet*, 10/03/2021, <https://savetibet.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and Huang Jingjing, ‘China invests in Tibetan Buddhist schools to produce next generation of religious leaders’, *Global Times*, 20/05/2015, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>23</sup> ‘New political requirements for Tibetan monastics’, Human Rights Watch, 30/10/2018 <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘吉隆县创新僧尼管理机制’ [‘Jilong County innovates management mechanism for monks and nuns’], 西藏日报 [*Tibet Daily*], 02/12/2015, <https://m.sohu.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>24</sup> Sophie Richardson, ‘Chinese authorities aim to “liberate” Tibetan believers’, Human Rights Watch, 22/10/2020, <https://www.hrw.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>25</sup> ‘Management measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism’, State Administration for Religious Affairs (US), 18/07/2007, <https://www.cecc.gov/> (checked: 14/01/2025).







those it disputes with India.<sup>30</sup> Along with highways and airports, this has involved the rapid construction of hundreds of new ‘villages’, often in locations previously considered unsuitable for settlement, to which rural Tibetans are currently being relocated from the interior.<sup>31</sup> Several of these new border villages have been constructed within Bhutan’s territory, in the northern and south-western sectors of its borders with the PRC, on which the PRC began making territorial claims in the 1980s.<sup>32</sup> Encouraged by generous subsidies, the settlers are supposed to serve as patriotic border guardians and to start businesses aimed at domestic tourism. The PRC’s assertive posture led to military standoffs with India (Doklam in 2017, eastern Ladakh in 2020), and a deterioration in diplomatic relations. India has since increased military deployments and road construction projects along its Himalayan borders.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion and recommendations

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A statement on 29th October 2008 from the then Foreign, Commonwealth and Office (FCO) stating that the United Kingdom (UK) regarded its historic position as archaic (and was therefore recognising the PRC as having sovereignty in Tibet) unreservedly did considerable harm to the Tibetan struggle and to India’s stand on the border. Unsurprisingly, this delighted the PRC, but brought the UK no benefit.<sup>34</sup>

Now that the PRC has severely curtailed the prospect of autonomy for Tibet and moved towards full assimilation, it is incumbent on the UK to reassert its historic position that Tibet’s autonomy should be respected. This reassertion

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<sup>30</sup> ‘New “defence” villages and infrastructure being built on Tibet’s border’, International Campaign for Tibet, 23/12/2019, <https://savetibet.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and Prakhar Gupta, ‘Why China Is Building Hundreds Of Border Villages Along The Himalayan Frontier With India’, *Swarajya Mag*, 28/01/2021, <https://swarajyamag.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>31</sup> ‘China’s Xiaokang (well-off) border defence villages in Tibet Autonomous Region’, Jayadev Ranade (ed.), *Xi Jinping: China’s third new era* (London: Routledge 2022) and [谢伟民 王冬] Xie Weimin and Wang Dong, ‘我国西藏边境地区民生的新发展及其启示’ [‘The new development and uplift of peoples’ livelihood in border areas of Tibet’], 中国藏学研究中心 [China Tibetology Research Center], 15/10/2022, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>32</sup> Robert Barnett, ‘China Is Building Entire Villages in Another Country’s Territory’, *Foreign Policy*, 07/05/2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>33</sup> Manoj Joshi, ‘China’s 2021 white paper on Tibet: implications for India’s China strategy’, Observer Research Foundation, 21/06/2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025).

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Brazil, ‘The Lion, the Wolf Warrior and the Crossroads: UK-China Relations at a Turning Point’, The Jamestown Foundation, 17/02/2023, <https://jamestown.org/> (checked: 14/01/2025); Robert Barnett, ‘Did Britain just sell Tibet?’, *New York Times*, 24/11/2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025) and ‘Britain’s suzerain remedy’, *The Economist*, 06/11/2008, <https://www.economist.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



would be consistent with the more coherent and robust defence of basic rights and values that is essential for the UK's diplomacy with Beijing, particularly after events in Hong Kong since 2020. It would be in keeping with the recent US Congress Resolve Tibet Act, which challenges the PRC's historical claims to Tibet, and would support India's resistance to Beijing's aggressive posture in the Himalaya.

The 2008 statement sent a message that the UK is prepared to sell off this legacy for expedient gain, which weakens its diplomatic standing with the PRC in the long term.<sup>35</sup> The recommendation is that the UK should neither confront the PRC over Tibet, nor cave in, but maintain a consistent position based on its unique historical position there.<sup>36</sup>

The UK should support those who can bring pressure to bear on the CCP. This means diplomatic support for India, the only major foreign power with interests at stake in Tibet. This endeavour would be helped if Britain clarified its support for Indian sovereignty in Arunachal Pradesh.

In light of all of this, His Majesty's (HM) Government should call on the CCP to:

- Reverse its policy of requiring all Tibetans to study in Chinese-medium schools and kindergartens and to provide Tibetan-medium education as an option in all Tibetan schools and kindergartens;
- Hold substantive talks immediately with the Dalai Lama and his representatives without preconditions to resolve his concerns about the preservation of Tibetan culture and meaningful autonomy in Tibet;
- Allow residents of the TAR the same rights as Chinese citizens in access to passports and thus to foreign travel;
- End all practices that involve pressure on Tibetans to relocate, or change their livelihood against their will;
- End the ban on any increase in the number of Tibetans who become monks or nuns and on all requirements on them to denounce the Dalai Lama and to preach political dogma or ideology on behalf of the CCP;
- Call on the PRC to end the ban on government employees, students, school children and others in Tibet from practising religion, visiting religious sites, or having religious objects in their homes;
- End the ban on images of, worship of, and religious publications by of the Dalai Lama and to cease all public denigration of him by the state;

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<sup>35</sup> The UK historically insisted on autonomy based on its unique interactions with an independent Tibetan state until this statement was made in 2008. His Majesty's (HM) Government position as a witness to Tibetan history remains highly relevant to a coherent UK position in its relations with the PRC.

<sup>36</sup> Chris Law and Nima Binara, 'It's Time for Britain to Reassess its Capitulation on Tibet', *Byline Times*, 14/09/2020, <https://bylinetimes.com/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



- End all practices that mandate or pressurise Tibetans to ‘mingle’ with people of other ethnicities, including pressure on them to intermarry;
- Allow foreign tourists, diplomats and journalists the same access to Tibet as to the rest of the PRC, except where necessary to prevent environmental damage;
- Call on the international community to reject the PRC’s claims to have authority over the identification of lamas and endorse the sole right of each religious community to identify such lamas;
- Recognise the exile administration as an essential party to any talks or discussions about Tibet and hold talks with its representatives accordingly; and,
- The UK should pursue and invest in its considerable historical influence with some of the countries facing acute pressure from Beijing over Tibet-related issues, particularly in higher education and civil society exchanges. Nepal, Bhutan and Mongolia face acute pressure from Beijing over Tibet-related issues, and the UK has historical influence with Nepal and Bhutan. The UK should provide solid and consistent diplomatic support for these small democratic nations.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gray Sergeant, ‘Geopolitics in the Himalayas: Towards a British strategy’, Council on Geostrategy, 09/11/2022, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 14/01/2025).



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