Reincarnation Under Stress: The Dalai Lama’s Succession and India–China Relations
Adrien Frossard

Abstract: The article seeks to assess the evolution of the Tibet question against the backdrop of the problems associated with the succession of the Dalai Lama. It also discusses the implications of all this for India and provides policy recommendations the Indian authorities could use to deal with this situation.

This article provides insights into how the succession of the Dalai Lama is likely to affect the Tibetan issue and thus India–China relations. More precisely, it makes an effort to assess the potential evolution of the institution of the Dalai with regard to the succession and the link it has with India and China. As the 14th Dalai Lama remains a crucial player in the Tibet question despite his resignation from political office, the Tibet issue continues to be of paramount importance in India–China relations. Against this backdrop, the article seeks answers to the following questions: How is the succession issue being approached by the Tibetans? What are the perspectives of India and China? Is succession likely to bring the Tibet question to an end? Will China renew pressure on India in the days to come as the succession issue assumes centre-stage? What course of action could India take? What implications does it have for India–China relations?

The 14th Dalai Lama turned 77 in 2012 and his aging has triggered a great deal of speculation regarding the future leadership of the Tibetan community. Throughout history, the Dalai Lama has been the central figure of the Tibetan nation and he inspires considerable respect and sympathy among the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama has played a crucial role in drawing international attention and support to the Tibetan cause. If this strategy has been successful so far, it could potentially backfire if the succession brings to the fore a new leadership less sensitive to the exiles’ cause. Whereas Chinese authorities have indicated their intention to lead the succession process, the Tibetan exiles strongly denounce such intrusion by a self-proclaimed secular state into their religious affairs, and claim that they alone have the exclusive right to choose the successor. They will therefore have to counter Chinese attempts to influence this process, which, in a way, endangers the Dalai Lama’s legitimacy and authority—and thus that of his successor.

Such a transition has not taken place since 1933; therefore, the context in which the succession is taking place is of great significance. In fact, there are two important factors influencing the process of succession which have to be taken into account.

Adrien Frossard is an independent researcher and was a Visiting Fellow at IDSA, New Delhi.

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Tibet question. This is regarded as a welcome development by many Tibetans living in exile in India. However, some others hold that the process may lead to a slackening of international attention and support in the coming days, because the Dalai Lama has played an important role in attracting the sympathy of the international community for the Tibetan cause.

The second important factor is the rise of China. The GDP of China has been growing at an average of 10 per cent for more than 15 years (despite a slow-down of about 7 per cent last year), and it has acquired huge clout in the international economy. This gives China more leverage than ever to make its voice heard on what it perceives as ‘core issues’—Tibet being identified as such. It is therefore likely that China will, more than ever, exert pressure on external players to stop helping the exiles.

In the case of the next succession, the next Dalai Lama will be a young boy when discovered, and he will have to be prepared for taking over as religious leader at the end of puberty, generally at the age of 18. However, this time round, there will be two Dalai Lamas instead of one. Therefore, the most likely succession scenario is one of protracted fight for legitimacy between two Dalai Lamas, both operating under regents—one among the exiles and one in China. The Tibetans favour the process of the Dalai Lama choosing his successor in the traditional way, and thus the possibility of an agreement between the exiles and the Chinese authorities on this matter is ruled out; therefore, one major feature of succession is likely to be a prolonged contest for external recognition by the two candidates.

Its economic leverage and the likelihood that the current Dalai Lama might step down are likely to favour China and ensure that its claims are accepted. Even though India has recognised China’s sovereignty over Tibet, the new context could put it under pressure as it has given the exiles refuge in its territory. Indeed, Tibet is at the core of India–China relations, as reflected in Mao’s statement that Tibet was the cause for the 1962 war between the two countries. The new developments in the context of Tibet mean that India will have to formulate a policy that protects its interests as well as its sovereignty. There are several options that India can exercise for dealing with the exiles, but it will have to keep in mind that they are a strategic asset for its Chinese policy.

It is argued here that the succession issue is likely to make the exiles more reliant on India. Therefore, India should pursue its current policy of accommodating both sides, because yielding too much to China could lead to more bullying, while standing up for the exiles would prove to be politically too costly. India should take care to communicate that its decision is based on calculated self-interest. Only by doing so, will India project itself as an independent power. Also, India should be prepared to thwart any attempt by the Tibetans to resort to violence against China, as it would put India at serious odds with its powerful northern neighbour. These views were ascertained during the field interviews conducted by the author in Dharamshala and in New Delhi.

The historical backdrop of the institution of the Dalai Lama

It is important to first understand the historical background of the institution of the Dalai Lama and why this transition is so crucial. According to Verhaegen: ‘The institution of the Dalai Lama has become, over the centuries, a central focus of Tibetan cultural identity; a symbolic embodiment of the Tibetan national character’.
system makes the Dalai Lama a crucial factor for any country that seeks to control Tibet. Throughout history, China has many times attempted to interfere in the process of succession for political purposes. Indeed, the ‘effort[s] to influence the selection of important lamas have been a key element of the exercise and consolidation of political authority in Tibetan areas since the establishment of a theocratic state in Tibet, for both distant imperial authorities as well as Tibetans themselves’.

The institution of the Dalai was established in 1578, by the Mongolian Khans. The fame of Sonam Gyatso, an energetic proponent of Tibetan Buddhism, reached the ears of the Mongol Khans who invited him to Mongolia. He so impressed the Khans with his wisdom and spirituality that they bestowed on him the title of ‘Dalai’ (Ocean), in view of the extent of his knowledge. At first, the Dalai Lama mainly played a spiritual role. He acquired political power one century later when he came back to Tibet with the backing of the Mongolian Khans, who deposed the reigning king and gave him the supreme power over Tibet. The fifth Dalai Lama, sometimes referred to as ‘the Great Fifth’, consolidated his relations with the Mongols and asserted his own and the authority of his school over Tibet. Since then, even though he rarely exercised real power, the Dalai Lama remained the official political and religious leader of Tibet. In fact, it was only in the early 20th century that the Dalai Lama became the most acceptable political and religious leader.

When the Dalai Lama was first installed, the search for his successor followed the traditional system ‘involv[ing] the predecessor’s predictive letter and other instructions and indications that might occur; the reincarnation’s reliably recounting his previous lore and speaking about it; identifying possessions belonging to the predecessor and recognizing people who had been close to him’. This procedure was overseen by a special committee, which searched for the likely reincarnations in accordance with the signs and instructions left by the presiding Dalai Lama. Once the candidates were identified, the search committee asked them to identify the objects belonging to the Dalai Lama among several fakes. The one who managed to pass this test was then recognised as the successor. This task was to be undertaken under the supervision of the Dalai Lama’s Gaden Phodrang Trust (office of the Dalai Lama).

The emergence of such a strong character in Tibet’s political scenario naturally drew the attention of neighbouring powers, which were trying to engage with Tibet. The Chinese first sought to engage diplomatically with the Dalai Lama, but given the increasing power asymmetry between the two countries, they gradually began to get involved in the selection process. The first Chinese attempt to intervene in the succession took place in 1792, when China introduced the ‘Twenty Nine Regulations for Better Government in Tibet’, which sought to reform the Tibetan political system to make it more stable. Chinese influence over Tibet reached its apex during this time, as a consequence of the chronic political instability in the country. The Regulations gave the Qing envoys to Tibet (known as amban) extensive power over the Tibetan government but, more importantly, introduced new regulations into the Dalai Lama’s selection process. According to this practice, the dates of birth and the names of each candidate were written in the Manchu, Han, and Tibetan languages on metal slips and placed in a golden urn. After prayers before the statue of the Buddha in the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, a slip was drawn by the amban ensuring recognition of the name on the slip for becoming the next Dalai Lama by the Chinese emperor. This intervention in the selection shows that Beijing was aware of the importance of the Dalai Lama, and
the Qing dynasty’s influence waned.

This practice was renewed in the 20th century after China was proclaimed a Republic. The new Chinese leaders tried to engage with the Dalai Lama by restoring his ranks and title, and by blaming the previous regime for all wrongs and misunderstandings. The latter rejected these Chinese overtures, declaring that the Tibet–China relationship was that of a Priest–Patron, and therefore the issue of subordination did not arise. This was seen in China as a declaration of independence by Tibet. Later on, in the wake of the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, Chiang Kai Shek’s Republic of China tried to interfere in Tibetan affairs, by once again seeking to play a role in the succession. Therefore, in 1935 and 1936, the Chinese government issued the ‘Regulation on the Management of Lama Monasteries’ and the ‘Method for the Reincarnation of Lamas’. These Regulations were designed to manipulate the selection process of all high-ranking lamas, but were largely ignored by Lhasa. The victory of the communists in China was followed by the implementation of the ‘17-Points Agreement’ in 1951, as per which the Tibetans handed over their sovereignty to China. Tibet for the first time came under codified Chinese domination. However, the escape of the Dalai Lama and the creation of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGiE) prevented the complete victory of China over Tibet because its head of state remained beyond Chinese control.

The upcoming succession thus offers a historical opportunity to the Chinese leadership to settle scores with Tibet. As with previous Chinese regimes, the current communist leadership seeks to use the selection of Dalai Lama to assert its control over Tibet. Concerned about the succession issue, the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) issued ‘State Order no. 5: Management Measures For the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism’ in 2007. According to these regulations, reincarnations require government approval to be legitimate. In addition, Chinese officials have also made statements in support of China’s claim. Indeed, for Jampa Phunstog, the chairman of the TAR government:

The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, like that of any Grand Living Buddha, must follow historical conventions and required religious rituals, and, more importantly among the traditions, approval from the central government. If the Dalai Lama does not follow the convention for political or other purposes, I believe his reincarnation would not be acknowledged by religious people in Tibet, and the central government will never approve it.

The Dalai Lama reacted by releasing a long statement, in September 2011, detailing his vision of the succession and the role he intends to play. After reiterating the fact that he has sole authority over the succession process as Dalai Lama, which was also recognised as such by all stakeholders, he laid out the entire process of succession to support his point of view. The main innovation in this was the introduction of the concept of ‘emanation’—equivalent to designation—as being a valid element in the selection process. However, the question regarding the means of succession remains a matter of debate. In this study, it is being argued that the Dalai Lama will favour the traditional way. Whatever his choice, he has reportedly stated that he would leave his final instructions, when he turns 90.

Be that as it may, control over the nomination of the Dalai Lama has been used by China to maintain its hold on Tibet. However, the Chinese have hardly ever managed
There are then huge stakes involved in the succession issue in the present context: China will certainly be able to enforce its regulations; while the exiles will be not be able to do anything but condemn Beijing’s interference.

The effect of succession on the Tibet question

The Dalai Lama has been an asset for the Tibetans in exile because of his unifying role and his ability to attract international support. To assess the effect of the succession on the Tibet question, it will be important to study what impact it will have on the Tibetans and how it will be received by the international community. It is most likely that there will be two Dalai Lamas—one supported by the exiles and the other propped up by the Chinese. It remains to be seen whether the successor will be able to maintain his authority—currently vested in the very institution of Dalai Lama—over the Tibetan community; whether the next spiritual leader of the Tibetans will remain as central to the Tibetan question as the present Dalai Lama; and whether external powers will treat him with as much respect and sympathy. It would also be relevant to study the effect of the succession on the Tibetan population within China. However, given the situation in Tibet and the restricted access to this area, it is impossible to do so with any accuracy. Therefore, the present study is based only on approach of the exiles to the institution of Dalai Lama.

Two elements must be noted regarding the situation in Tibet. First, China has markedly increased its security apparatus in the region. Indeed, in the wake of the 2008 riots in Tibet, a series of steps were taken by China, which suggest that it is likely to further tighten its control over Tibet. The security forces have been reinforced with a large numbers of PLA (People’s Liberation Army) and PAP (People’s Armed Police) forces who were moved into eastern Tibet and Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to prevent riots. Moreover, in January 2010, Padma Choling, a former PLA officer was named as the new Chairman of the TAR government. For Barnett, it indicated ‘that China now perceives Tibet through the angle of military control’. Secondly, there has been a marked increase in the number of self-immolations in Tibet, with 26 cases reported in the month of November 2012 alone. Such incidents lend credence to the view advanced by the exiles that there is still much resistance to Chinese rule in Tibet. Amongst the exiled Tibetan community the most compelling factor remains the continued external support and the unity among the Tibetans which keeps the Tibet question alive.

The succession issue is likely to bring about tremendous changes in the role of the Dalai Lama because of the emergence of a parallel secular leadership and there will probably be a period of regency. The movement towards democracy launched by the Dalai Lama in 1960 peaked on March 10, 2011, when he announced that he would hand over his authority to an elected leader. He declared: ‘As early as the 1960s, I repeatedly stressed that Tibetans need a leader, elected freely by the Tibetan people, to whom I could devolve power. Now, we have clearly reached the time to put this into effect’. The Tibetan exiles elected their prime minister soon after this for the first time in Tibet’s history. This marked a tremendous change in Tibet’s political life, as political authority shifted from the Dalai Lama to the civil authorities, with Lobsang Sangay taking over as the political leader (Sikyong). The current Dalai Lama may continue to
ral affairs will certainly affect the course of Tibetan politics in the coming days and especially post-succession. It is highly likely that the power of the political leadership will increase, marking a corresponding reduction of the power of the Dalai Lama.

It is difficult to foresee how these two poles of the Tibetan leadership will interact with each other. Ultimately, the personality of the next Dalai Lama will be crucial, as he will have to assert himself and compete with the present political leadership for influence. However, there are certain indications that the Dalai Lama’s political authority is on the wane. Indeed, while he remains committed to the Middle Way, some sections do not hesitate to advocate a more militant approach. Commenting on the self-immolations, the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) vice-president had declared that: ‘The Middle Path is the strategy of His Holiness and the militant struggle is ours . . . Maybe one day both the angles will meet’. This could be a sign that the institution of the Dalai Lama may be limited to religious matters in the middle- or long-term.

According to many Tibetan exiles, the Dalai Lama deliberately diluted his role in the Tibet question to make the exiles less reliant on him. There is a general belief that whatever decision the Dalai Lama takes is good for the Tibetans and that he should be listened to. As one interviewee said, ‘the Dalai Lama’s resignation was meant to ensure ‘more civil society, less Dalai Lama’. In view of the succession, his resignation can also be seen as a tactical move, as by disconnecting politics from religion—especially in the wake of the controversies surrounding the succession issue—the institution of Dalai Lama might ‘lose’ its importance but the Tibetans will not lose the game and the newly empowered political leadership will keep the Tibetan question alive.

However, the reduction in the Dalai Lama’s authority may have some adverse consequences. It could divide the exile community along political and religious lines. The process of selection of political leadership, through democratic means, is likely to bring to the fore contending viewpoints which may prove divisive. Thus what could be seen as progress in terms of democracy could lead to disunity and thus weaken the Tibetan movement. Even though bulk of the interviewees denied the existence of any internal division so far, the fact remains that the Tibetans are politically divided between those who are agitating for independence and those who support autonomy. As the Dalai Lama promoted the Middle Way approach, the political leadership remains committed to that. But the situation could change dramatically once he is no more.

Another line of division is the religious one. The Dalai Lama says that he represents all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, but his removal could revive tensions between them. In this context, as the future Dalai Lama might be too young to take over, the issue of the regent will also become problematic. The other influential lama in exile, the Karmappa has gained considerable renown, especially because of the media controversy over his arrival. His appointment as regent could be contested because, although he commands a lot of authority, he represents only the Karma Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Another problem arising from the Dalai Lama’s loss of authority is the likelihood of exiles taking to violence. Goldstein says that the Dalai Lama has long been committed to non-violence, and his authority over the exiles allowed him to prevent this. According to the Dalai Lama’s special envoy, without the Dalai Lama’s advocacy, ‘there is no way that the entire population would be able to contain their resentment and anger’. But violence, though tempting, cannot be a solution for the Tibetan issue;
In case there are people who intend to use violence and terrorism against us, you should know the results of each of the fights that we had with them in the past... We fought before, didn’t we? If certain people still want to use violence and terrorism, not only that they will never succeed, but that they will be condemned and will perish even faster politically.  

Such rejection of violence does not imply that the Tibetans renounce militant struggle completely. The Tibetan writer Jamyang Norbu dismisses the denigration of militancy as ‘scare tactics’ and argues that the Tibetan people should abandon the Middle Way approach (MWA) and advocate for a more militant approach. He cautions that the international community supports dialogue, but not specifically the MWA; accordingly, the Tibetans could drop this stance and adopt a different strategy without losing international support.

The succession is also likely to have a marked impact on the exile community as the next Dalai Lama will have no authority in political matters. This is a major turning point as there has been no division between politics and religion in Tibet’s polity for centuries. The major issue at stake is the possible fragmentation of Tibetan political landscape, and the potential for violence. This may also change the international community’s stance on the Tibet question.

The succession issue—together with the growing appetite for militancy—may lead to some important changes in the Dalai Lama’s role vis-à-vis the international community, which has long played a critical role in the Tibet question, as external recognition was one, if not the main, issue between China and the exiles. With the US being most influential and generally favourable towards the exiles, the Tibetan question has remained open thanks to international pressure. However, despite the fact that the ‘international campaign’ the Dalai Lama launched in 1987 was a success, it did not change the situation in Tibet and only made the exiles more reliant on external actors. With the succession coming up against the backdrop of the secularisation of the political leadership, and more importantly, in the context of China’s rise, this strategy is likely to backfire as the international community may feel compelled to cooperate with China rather than the exiles taking to violence.

Combining political authority with moral excellence, the Dalai Lama, as the unchallenged representative of the Tibetan people, has so far drawn a lot of attention at the international level. As a religious figurehead, his meetings with foreign leaders has been regarded as a matter of religion rather than political consideration. However, in the days to come, after shedding his political authority, the institution of the Dalai Lama may not be as successful in projecting the Tibetan cause. Tibet could then be another name in the long list of unresolved political conflicts. This would be the worst-case scenario for the exiles, and would favour China.

The other reason for wide international support was the fact that China was still a developing country in the early days of the Tibet question. However, China has come a long way since the days of ‘Great Leap Forward’ and ‘the Cultural Revolution’, which left millions of people starving. After Mao passed away, Deng Xiaoping implemented liberal reforms and announced the ‘Four Modernisations’ in 1978, thus paving the way for China to enter the globalised world. During this period, China adopted a ‘low profile’ policy, conscious that China was too weak to assert itself. Beijing did have
Tibet. However, with China’s rise on the international stage as a manufacturing hub, and trade between China and the developed world in the West picking up, it is no longer considered politically sagacious amongst the Western countries to antagonise China over the Tibetan issue.

China’s recently acquired economic clout gives it more leverage than ever to bully any country which supports the exiles. With $5 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, a huge internal market and a powerful military, maintaining a good relationship with China is becoming ever more crucial for a lot of countries. As Martin observes, China is currently the first economic partner of more and more countries. Thus it is highly likely that China will be able to ensure the election of its nominee as Dalai Lama, by using economic boycott as a threat. The example of China voicing its anger against Germany and France for receiving the Dalai Lama provides an insight into the diplomatic activism China can deploy. According to Smith, it is as though ‘China used the “Sarkozy affair” to lay down a new “red line” that European countries must not cross. All countries were put on notice . . . that the Tibet issue was one of China’s “core interests”’. The exiles are very aware of this new reality. Indeed, there is a shared concern among the Tibetan exile community that the international community will compromise with China because of its economic power, despite the former’s emphasis on human rights and other moral considerations. As Tibetans prepare themselves for the succession, this reality, that there would be a decrease of formal or informal display of support for the exiles at the international level, is going to haunt them in the days to come.

Finally, the succession is likely to mark an end to the institution of Dalai Lama as it has been for centuries, as it will not enjoy the same legitimacy and the same authority. Even if the new Dalai Lama continues to be revered by most Tibetans, his authority as a public figure will certainly decline as he will not enjoy political authority, and also because the external powers may not recognise him as the genuine representative of the Tibetan people. The situation of the exiles is likely to become more difficult in this new environment, as the Tibet question is moving closer to a classic political struggle. In this context, they will certainly become more reliant on India, which will have to deal with a renewed Tibetan dilemma.

The effect of succession on India–China relations

The Tibet question is inseparable from India–China relations, as it has long been a stumbling block between the two countries, going so far as to trigger a war between them. It is important to review the historical position India has taken on Tibet, as it provides us with an insight into its effectiveness in the past. As has been argued above, following the succession, the Tibetan movement may turn violent and international support may decline; therefore, India may face renewed, if not increasing, Chinese pressure to tackle ‘anti-Chinese’ activity on its soil on the one hand, while on the other, the Tibetans will need India’s support more than ever, which could create a security concern.

India’s Tibet policy has been to sit on the fence, and it has long been accommodating both sides. First and foremost, India wants good relations with China, even at the expense of Tibet. Under the leadership of Nehru, and according to his famous formula of ‘Hindi–Chini Bhai Bhai’, India’s official policy was to woo China. Accordingly,
stipulated that Tibet is ‘a region of China’. Later on, when the TGiE was established in Dharamshala on April 28, 1959, no formal ties were forged with the Indian government. Although this strategy of accommodation could not prevent a war, India continued to use Tibet as a bargaining chip in its relations with China. This policy still continues, as illustrated by the visit of the Indian prime minister to China 2003. At that time, Atal Behari Vajpayee acknowledged Tibet as a part of China in exchange for China’s informal recognition of India’s sovereignty over Sikkim. The absence of conflict and China’s friendly gesture notwithstanding, this policy now seems to be unraveling, as China did not officially recognise Sikkim and China still believes that India is challenging its rule in Tibet.

Chinese perception is mainly fed by the fact that in spite of its official policy, India is hosting the Tibetan exiles, and it feels that without India’s consent the Tibetans would not be able to fight. When the Dalai Lama and his followers fled from Tibet in 1959 they were welcomed by Delhi and provided decent living conditions. India was conscious that welcoming the Dalai Lama would harm its relations with China, but decided to provide informal support as it deemed it to be its responsibility. Today, India hosts nearly 100,000 Tibetan refugees and is adding an average of 1,000 refugees a year according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UN HCR). The Tibetans were given land which is independently ruled by the TGiE under the auspices of the government of India. This has sowed the seeds of distrust between India and China. Indeed, Mao is reported to have told a Nepalese delegation in 1964 that the ‘major problem between India and China was not the McMahon Line, but the Tibetan question’, adding that ‘in the opinion of the Indian government, Tibet is theirs’. Thus India is likely to be affected by the succession as it will not only have to deal with a large community living on Indian soil but also its relationship with its most powerful neighbour.

India will have to face two challenges post-succession: (i) renewed pressure from China, and (ii) divisions among the Tibetan exiles that could lead to violence. India may countenance more assertive demands for tackling ‘anti-Chinese’ activity on its soil, and/or it may have to even recognise the ‘official’ Dalai Lama nominated by Beijing. China wants the Indian government to prevent demonstrations or any other public protests against China, just like Nepal. This would enable China to maintain an advantageous status quo and neutralise external opposition from the exiles. China could also resort to aggressive rhetoric, as well as threats of economic sanctions, which could inhibit India’s response to its belligerent policy towards the Tibetans, as India strives to strengthen its economy (on the lines of the ‘Sarkozy affair’). China could also pressurise India to send the refugees back. Such a prospect is however highly unlikely given the conditions in Tibet and the historical backdrop of India–China relations.

In response to China’s request, the article argues that in contrast to the Tibetan MWA, India has a ‘Middle Way’ policy vis-à-vis China over the Tibetan issue, which best serves its interests, as it allows it to keep the exiles as a strategic asset and reaffirm India’s strategic autonomy without endangering its relations with China. Yet, as the succession draws nearer, India should focus on its communication strategy, and not overestimate China’s importance as a rising power. Economic integration is the most quoted argument to justify India’s need for good relations with China. However, there is no evidence that political differences will necessarily harm India–China economic relations. Indeed, if India considers China an important economic partner, it should be
with the Chinese view. Nonetheless, India has to stay prepared for revived Chinese
greed for disputed territory as Beijing has already staked a new claim on the ‘Finger
Area’ in Sikkim.\textsuperscript{34} However, even if it has serious security implications, there is no
need for India to confront China over the Tibet issue, and India should decouple the
Tibet question from the rest of India–China relations and pursue its relationship with
China without sacrificing its core national interests.

However, the possible divisions within the exiles community may create greater
complications for India. If the Tibetan presence on Indian soil has thus far not created
security issues as demonstrated by Panda, Gautam and Hussain, the succession could
change that.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, if attacks on Chinese soil were to be launched from Indian soil,
then India could come under considerable pressure from China to tackle the problem
more coercively. Such an event could considerably strain relations between the two
countries and increase the cost of hosting the Tibetans for India. India can take a two-
pronged approach to this issue. On the one hand it may have to monitor the activities of
the most radical elements among the exiles, notably, those demanding an independent
Tibet. On the other hand, it can take preventive measures and open discussions with the
Tibetan leaders when the succession occurs to assist them in handling the situation.

In the end, as the exiles are likely to become more reliant on India following the
succession, the Tibet question will again be at the centre of India–China relations.
As China is likely to act more assertively, India will have to defend its interests and
demonstrate its ability to resist Chinese pressure to assert its status of regional power
while maintaining the dialogue so as to avoid a useless confrontation. The ability of the
newly elected Tibetan political leaders to unify the exiles and gain acceptance for their
policies, as well as their ability to prevent violence, will be crucial for maintaining a
sustainable Tibetan presence on Indian soil. Nevertheless, India should take preventive
measures and be prepared in case violence breaks out. Ultimately, it appears that the
succession will be a good test for the positive engagement between India and China
and their ability to address concerns on a bilateral basis.

Notes
   February 20, 1974, p. 573
3. A. Verhaegen, \textit{The Dalai Lamas: The Institution and its History}, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi,
5. Website of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, ‘Statement of His Holiness the
dalailama.com/news/post/753-statement-of-his-holiness-the-fourteenth-dalai-lama-tenzin-
6. Xinhua website (as this is China’s official mouthpiece, Xinhua is a useful as it provides us
7. Xinhua website, ‘Tibetan Official: Dalai Lama’s Reincarnation Needs Nod From Central
   September 22, 2012).
As the ‘emanation’ will lower the stature of Dalai Lama without preventing the Chinese from promoting their own candidate, we argue that the traditional way is more likely.

J. Famularo, no. 4.


A prime minister was previously elected in 2001 but he remained under the authority of the Dalai Lama.


Interviews conducted by the author in Dharamshala, November 5–9, 2012.

Interview with Tibetan Refugee, New Delhi, January 7, 2013.


W. Smith, no. 12, p. 216.

According to Deng Xiaoping, China should ‘adopt a low profile and never take the lead’.


W. Smith, no. 12, p. 273.

Interviews conducted by the author in Dharamshala, 5–9 November, 2012.


