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CHINESE TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION OF TIBETAN DIASPORA COMMUNITIES 2024



ABOUT TCHRD

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is the first Tibetan non-governmental human rights organisation established in exile. Founded in January 1996, it is based in Dharamshala, in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, and registered as an NGO under Section 2 of the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860.

We are committed to advancing human rights and democracy in Tibet and the exiled Tibetan community by empowering Tibetan advocates and monitoring, documenting, and campaigning against human rights abuses. We envision a future where every Tibetan can exercise human rights and democratic freedoms.

TCHRD is currently a member of the Geneva-based World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Asia Pacific for Refugee Rights Network, and International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and collaborates with numerous leading human rights NGOs.

TCHRD's staff members are Ms Tenzin Dawa, executive director; Ms Tsering Tsomo, research director; Ms Phurbu Dolma, accountant and manager; Mr Sangjie Kyab, Mr Nyima Woesser and Mr Ngawang Lungtok, researchers; Ms Ottoline Mary, research fellow; Ms Phurbu Dolma, legal officer; Mr Yashi Lhundrub and Mr Tashi, field officers; and Ms Kunchok Chodon, office assistant.

“ Imagine your country is being invaded and you have to leave Tibet, leaving your parents behind. Now imagine moving across the world, starting a family, building a new life. Here you meet people who have the same roots and share a similar fate like you. You start getting involved and you support your community in coming together and living the culture you and your parents had to leave behind. It feels like you found a little bit of home, far away from home. Then, suddenly, you and your family members start receiving disturbing phone calls in the language spoken by those who invaded your country whenever you are about to attend meetings that revolve around the topic of your home. Never the exact same calls but always the same style and the timing never fails. They are watching you. They know where you are and know where you are going. How does it feel? ”

Dawa Tsering
President of the Tibetan Community in the Netherlands,
addressing the European Parliament on 30 November 2023

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I. GENERAL DEFINITION OF TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Transnational repression (TNR) has been defined by Freedom House as the phenomenon whereby “governments reach across national borders to silence dissent among their diaspora and exile communities.”² It is typically committed by authoritarian states that routinely violate the fundamental rights of certain segments of their population in an attempt to keep them under tight government control.

Transnational repression can manifest:

- at state level (e.g. foreign authorities extraditing refugees back to their states of origin, where they will be subjected to government-mandated abuse);
- at subnational level (e.g. governments using economic threats to get foreign institutions or companies to cooperate with them);
- at individual level (e.g. government-backed spies blackmailing exiled activists by threatening to harm their family members who still live in their country of origin).

The United States’ Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) emphasises the illegal nature of TNR, as a phenomenon violating US law and individual rights and freedoms. “Some countries’ governments harass and intimidate their own citizens living in the U.S. These governments may also target naturalised or U.S.-born citizens who have family overseas or other foreign connections. This violates U.S. law and individual rights and freedoms. [...] Governments use transnational repression tactics to silence the voices of their citizens (or non-citizens connected to the country), get information from them, or coerce them to return home.”³

The US Congress’ Transnational Repression Policy Act (2023) defines TNR as “the actions of foreign

governments to intimidate, silence, or harm members of diaspora and exile communities to prevent them from exercising their human rights.”⁴

The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) defines TNR as “the practice of the extraterritorial targeting of dissidents and opposition groups.”⁵

According to Safeguard Defenders, the TNR perpetrators attempt to “silence or adversely influence independent democratic discourse on authoritarian actors” by severely undermining the free enjoyment of the freedom of speech, freedom of movement and/or freedom of assembly and association.⁶



II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINESE TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exerts transnational repression against a variety of communities, labelled “the five poisons”: Tibetans, Uyghurs, Taiwanese, Chinese dissidents (including Hong Kong protesters), and Falun Gong practitioners.⁷ Another lesser-known victim of the CCP-led transnational repression is the Southern Mongolian population (see p. 4).

Although transnational repression campaigns have been practised for decades, their frequency has significantly increased in recent years. The CCP has strengthened its extraterritorial powers to persecute all perceived sources of opposition.⁸ This phenomenon constitutes the international extension of the repression campaigns conducted within the PRC, which have intensified since the CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping’s accession to power and the “massive expansion”⁹ of the United Front (UF) work, which is the main implementing arm of Chinese TNR.¹⁰ Indeed, Xi Jinping’s ongoing mandate is characterised by two trends: the centralisation of political authority and an aggressive foreign policy,¹¹ both of which factor into the concerning rise of transnational repression.

According to Ramona Li from the Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders, “Within the last five years, the Chinese government has become more sensitive to human rights activism. The degree of open engagement that was possible in 2018 would be unimaginable now. The degree of expression that will trigger retaliation is lower.”¹²

In particular, the increasing securitisation of issues related to ethnic and cultural minorities – portrayed as party enemies – aims to mobilise international support for CCP policies.¹³ The PRC’s repression

apparatus makes members of minority groups more vulnerable to pressure by systematically dismantling their solidarity networks, perceived as threats to state authority. Ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as political dissidents, are canaries in a coalmine that illustrate the CCP’s global and expanding TNR campaign.¹⁴

Furthermore, the TNR tactics used by the CCP seem to inspire other autocratic regimes (e.g. Burma, Iran, Venezuela) seeking to silence pro-democracy activists.¹⁵

These recent developments have not gone unnoticed. The present report is being published at a time when the phenomenon of CCP-led transnational repression is attracting increased attention, with the issuance of multiple general reports in recent years (see p. 4). However, to date, there has been no substantial report focusing on the global TNR of Tibetans. We must nonetheless acknowledge three series of initiatives:

- an ongoing (2009-) series of regular publications from Canada-based laboratory The Citizen Lab, investigating cyberattacks targeting Tibetan communities;
- the in-depth study cases issued by Human Rights Watch Under China’s Shadow: Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal (2014) and “They Don’t Understand the Fear We Have”: How China’s Long Reach of Repression Undermines Academic Freedom at Australia’s Universities (2021);
- the work of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), and especially its recent hearing Preserving Tibet: Combating Cultural Erasure, Forced Assimilation, and Transnational Repression (28 March 2023).

III. AN UNDERACKNOWLEDGED PHENOMENON

This report is the first to focus on transnational repression in the Tibetan diaspora. Why has this aspect remained under-addressed for so long? It would be a mistake to infer that TNR against Tibetans is less severe or more recent than other minority groups when the Tibetan community has a long history of coming into exile in 1959, with the first documented evidence of contemporary TNR against them dating back to the late 1980s. Since the imposition of Martial Law in 1989 to suppress the Lhasa protests,¹⁶ the CCP has increasingly viewed the international Tibet movement as a leading threat to its global reputation.¹⁷ The Chinese government started denouncing every international visit made by the Dalai Lama, and started sending their people to look into the workings of both governmental and non-governmental organisations such as the Tibetan Youth Congress. A trend was identified in the early 2000s whereby the CCP demanded that Chinese government officials of Tibetan origin unenroll their children from Tibetan schools in India, and enrol them inside the PRC instead; if not, the parents would lose their jobs and have their state subsidies revoked.

Following the 2008 uprising in Tibet, the Chinese government decided to completely sever the relationships between Tibetans inside and outside of the region. That is when the movement truly extended beyond high-profile Tibetan leaders and institutions, to start targeting ordinary Tibetans living in exile.

In the early years of China's TNR campaign against Tibetans, the CCP sent low level personnel to work as spies; nowadays, it involves highly trained professionals and sophisticated technologies. If anything, the persistence of this phenomenon may have normalised it in the lives of Tibetans, who have never experienced anything else. In this regard, the recent conceptualisation of TNR and the concomitant awareness-raising campaigns can hopefully help victims to acknowledge and resist TNR in their everyday lives. In particular, it is vital for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) – an authority trusted by hundreds of thousands of Tibetans worldwide – to show leadership on this issue.

An estimated 80 to 90% of Tibetan refugees with family and relatives living in Tibet have experienced TNR, according to a senior official at the security department of the exile Tibetan government.¹⁸ TNR targets both those born in Tibet and those born in exile. Tibetans involved in political activities are at greater risk, but anyone

can be targeted. Indeed, the CCP is carrying out an all-encompassing strategy to undermine Tibetan identity in all its components – including language and religion. In this respect, transnational repression can be interpreted as a form of “sharp power”, which seeks to “pierce, penetrate, or perforate” the political and cultural environments of targeted countries.¹⁹ The aim is to suppress dissent as well as any cultural manifestation perceived by the CCP as a threat to its ideological narrative; in some cases, the victims are coerced into returning to China. Regarding overseas dissidents in particular, DoubleThink Lab identifies two types of strategies: to undermine the legitimacy of overseas advocacy organisations, and to hinder their functionality.²⁰

TNR can manifest as direct attacks from CCP-related actors, such as in-person and online harassment and intimidation, physical violence, asset freezing, and coercion by proxy. In many cases, to control the actions of exiled Tibetans, the Chinese authorities instrumentalise their relatives in Tibet, by harming, threatening, or otherwise manipulating them. The looming threat resulting from ubiquitous surveillance also fosters a constant feeling of unease that spreads fear and disempowers exiled communities. Knowing that there are spies planted among their members undermines the trust that is essential to the survival of diaspora networks.

The perpetrators of TNR have diverse profiles, only part of whom can be directly linked to the CCP (e.g. officials of Chinese embassies abroad). Others are individuals suspected of working as undercover agents for the UFWD – including Chinese professionals from various fields who work abroad (e.g. in academic circles). In some cases, the direct perpetrators themselves act under threat from the CCP (e.g. Chinese students abroad are blackmailed into spying on other students lest the government forbid their return to China).

Surveillance and censorship are ubiquitous. The CCP and its proxies gather personal information on exiled Tibetans through several means: by questioning their relatives in Tibet, by exploiting cybersecurity breaches, and by mandating spies. It is important to note that the mechanisms used by the CCP to repress Tibetan activism might also be applied to wider communities, thereby constituting a threat to human rights and democracy in our societies at large.

TNR poses increasing threats to Tibetan diaspora communities and thereby to the future of the

Tibetan freedom movement. It provokes a rupture between Tibetans in Tibet and Tibetan in exile, thereby (1) further restricting options for the former to flee Tibet; (2) preventing the circulation of information about the situation in Tibet; and (3) weakening solidarity networks that are essential to the survival of the Tibetan community. Furthermore, through TNR, the CCP coerces exiled Tibetans into renouncing activism, which results in less experts in Tibetan NGOs, less Tibetan representatives at international forums, and an overall loss of resources for the Tibetan freedom movement, thereby undermining its efficiency.

Due to the nature of TCHRD, our processes of data collection and analysis essentially deal with phenomena directly impacting Tibetans. However, it is possible to draw comparisons with cases of transnational repression against other communities, especially against ethnic minorities within the PRC: Uyghurs and Southern Mongolians.

- Human rights abuses against Uyghurs have been gaining attention in the international community since 2017, when worldwide media started to report on the “re-education camps” set up by the Chinese authorities in East Turkestan (region referred to by the Chinese government as Xinjiang). Four years earlier, Xi Jinping had ordered a “war on terror” policy of fighting separatism in Xinjiang, with the alleged fight against “religious extremism” serving as a pretext to implement assimilationist ethnic and cultural policies.²¹ Moreover, in 2016, the former Party Secretary of Tibet became the new Party Secretary for Xinjiang, thereby exporting the harsh social control mechanisms applied in Tibet.²² As living conditions in Xinjiang worsened, cases of transnational repression against Uyghurs living in exile also multiplied, based on the threat of harming their relatives back in China – the latter are thereby “used as proxies” for coercion.²³ This threat is used to obtain information about themselves or other Uyghurs living in exile, to silence dissenting voices (including in the academic sphere), and even to coerce people into returning to Xinjiang. Another manifestation of transnational repression is the CCP’s ability to, when not directly commanding extraditions, at least weaken the legislation of foreign governments in regard to the protection of Uyghur refugees. The latter are also tracked through the same digital tools as Tibetans, i.e., malware and social media surveillance (typically via WeChat).

- Transnational repression against **Southern Mongolians** targets those having ties with Southern Mongolia (region referred to by the Chinese government as Inner Mongolia), which was incorporated into Transnational repression against Southern Mongolians targets those having ties with Southern Mongolia (region referred to by the Chinese government as Inner Mongolia), which was incorporated into the PRC in 1947 – as opposed to Mongolia itself, which has been an independent state since 1921. Akin to what is happening in Tibet and in Xinjiang, the CCP has been launching campaigns against Mongolian cultural identities and practices, including language. State-led repression inside the region has reportedly increased since 2020,²⁴ hand in hand with a surge in transnational repression. The aim is to deter members of the Mongolian diaspora from denouncing the human rights abuses occurring in Inner Mongolia, by threatening to harm their local relatives. The New York-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre has also reported a series of politically motivated suicides,²⁵ which recall Tibetan self-immolations.

General reports on Chinese TNR (some including insights about the Tibetan issue):

- Swedish Defence Research Agency: The Chinese Communist Party and the Diaspora: Beijing’s Extraterritorial Authoritarian Rule (2020)
- Australian Strategic Policy Institute: The Party Speaks For You: Foreign Interference and the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front System (2020)
- Freedom House: Perspectives on “Everyday” Transnational Repression in an Age of Globalization (2020); Out of Sight, Not Out of Reach: The Global Scale and Scope of Transnational Repression (2021); Defending Democracy in Exile: Policy Responses to Transnational Repression (2022)
- Safeguard Defenders: Involuntary Returns: China’s Covert Operation to Force ‘Fugitives’ Overseas Back Home (2022); 110 Overseas: Chinese Transnational Policing Gone Wild (2022); Hide and Seek: China’s Extradition Problem (2022)
- DoubleThink Lab: Silenced Voices, Hidden Struggles: PRC Transnational Repression of Overseas Human Rights Activists (2023)



IV. UNITED FRONT WORK DEPARTMENT (UFWD)

The UFWD is one of the seven departments overseen by the Central Committee of the CCP (i.e. a political body composed of the 380 highest-ranking members). The term englobes a network of organisations that are orchestrated by the CCP to control political representation at both domestic and overseas levels, influencing foreign institutions and public opinion.²⁶ In particular, the UFWD is in charge of managing the central policy coordination groups on Tibet and Xinjiang. The CCP uses united front work in both domestic and foreign policy.

After the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi Jinping has centralised direct Party control over key issues such as ethnic, religious Overseas Chinese affairs, sidelining the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, the State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, all of which were absorbed into the UFWD.²⁷

The united front work involves in both domestic and foreign contexts the “use of prominent front groups, an emphasis on co-opting influential individuals, and efforts to discredit those who aren’t aligned with the CCP’s goals.” In March 2018, the CCP placed the Chinese diaspora affairs under the direct leadership of the UFWD, which mostly operates through diplomats stationed in Chinese embassies tasked with “interfering in the diaspora.” Most of these diplomats responsible for diaspora work come from the UFWD rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The party regulations on united front work define 12 broad groups to be targeted among which are non-CCP intellectuals, ethnic minorities, religious individuals, private businesses, urban professionals, overseas and returned overseas students. Another important work of the united front’s overseas mission is to monitor the activities

the Chinese diaspora and silencing dissidents based abroad.

Accounts of Tibetans who experienced various forms and degrees of TNR attest to the fact that the united front work also involves active recruitment of individuals in the targeted groups not only “to neutralise any opposition they may pose, but also to have them serve as platforms for further efforts.”²⁸

The united front work in foreign policy is guided by “stepped-up efforts to manage and guide the Chinese diaspora—both Han Chinese and ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs and Tibetans—so as to utilise them as agents of Chinese foreign policy while meting out increasingly harsh treatment do those who do not cooperate” as well as “co-opting and cultivating foreign economic and political elites in foreign nations to support and promote the CCP’s global foreign policy goals.”²⁹

According to expert Alex Joske, the goal of the UFWD at an international level is “to manipulate and claim the right to speak on behalf of ethnic Chinese communities”³⁰ by “maintain[ing] clandestine relationships with Tibetan diaspora figures through UFWD officials posted to embassies and consulates around the world.”³¹ The overseas expansion of the UFWD amounts to an exportation of the CCP’s political system, giving the latter undue influence over political representation and expression in foreign political systems.³²

The concept of a “united front” has long been used as a front to hide intelligence operations,³³ such as those conducted by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), which is the PRC’s official police service, and by the Ministry of State Security (MSS), which is the PRC’s secret police service and global (counter)

intelligence agency. Many of the united front activities responsible for committing TNR have been described as extralegal or “grey zone” operations.³⁴

As has been documented in other Chinese diaspora communities about the interferences and pressure exerted by the united front agents, Tibetan witnesses documented in this report have shared the long hand of Chinese influence over leading foreign academic presses and universities.

Tibetans in North America, Europe and Australia who shared their stories for this report expressed concern over the suspected hand of the UFWD in some newly informed organisations with vague information on their founders or office bearers purportedly working for the welfare of Tibetans living in diaspora communities. Indeed, there have been cases of groups and organisations funded and co-opted by the united front such as business groups, student groups and “friendship associations” in foreign countries that had been used as a tool to exert pressure on foreign institutions to for instance cancel visits from the Dalai Lama.³⁵

The united front work in Chinese foreign missions is closely connected to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Federation, which has been set up both inside and outside of PRC, allowing easy access to the CCP authorities to monitor and exert pressure on TNR targets such as exile Tibetan with family and relatives living in Tibet. The 2012 opening of the TAR branch marked the full coverage of the provincial-level overseas Chinese federations across the PRC barring Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, according to the Chinese state media.³⁶ Since 2019, overseas Chinese federations have been opened at all levels of government from the county up in TAR.³⁷ It marked the growing power and influence of the UFWD as it subsumed other government agencies dealing with foreign, overseas Chinese, religious and ethnic affairs.³⁸ According to Chinese authorities, there are about 200,000 overseas Tibetans [from TAR] in nearly 50 countries and regions that are “Chinese minority groups living abroad due to special historical conditions are an inseparable and important part of overseas Chinese.”³⁹



V. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

This report focuses on the Tibetan accounts of TNR dating back to the last decade. Indeed, since Xi Jinping's accession to power in 2012 – and especially since the start of his second (and unlimited) term in 2018, instances of transnational repression in the Tibetan diaspora have become more intense and frequent. In addition to the CCP's increasing ambitions, technological developments have also allowed for a global-scale network of surveillance mechanisms.

The first-hand data presented in this report was collected between June 2022 and November 2023, while second-hand sources describe events ranging from June 2011 to November 2023.

• PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

We collected 84 first-hand testimonies from exiled Tibetans having experienced TNR. These testimonies were collected through TCHRD's field officers in Tibet and abroad, as well as during the two-day workshops that we organised in Paris (June 2023) and New York City (November 2023). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the report excludes data that might put respondents at risk, such as their full names, cities of origin in Tibet, and current cities abroad.

Gender	Testimonies
Male	59
Female	25

Current Location	Testimonies
India	42
United States	12
France	6
Australia	4
Canada	4
Switzerland	2
Belgium	2
Netherlands	1
Nepal	1
Spain	1
Unknown	9

It is also noteworthy that a further 26 individuals refused to testify. While the unwillingness to respond cannot automatically be interpreted as transnational repression, self-censorship⁴⁰ is a common symptom of the latter.

Given this constraint, and given the topic itself, this report cannot claim to deliver an exhaustive and unbiased panorama of the various forms transnational repression can take. Therefore, just because something is not mentioned in this report does not mean that it does not exist; more than likely, the most significant threats are those which are most likely to be the object of self-censorship. Similarly, the under-representation of certain geographical areas in terms of numbers of testimonies does not necessarily reflect greater civil liberties; on the contrary, it could imply a particularly harsh repression in said areas.

• **SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION**

To supplement our primary data, we compiled 120 online news articles and reports relaying testimonies and/or providing analysis on the CCP's transnational repression apparatus.

Most of these secondary sources describe cases of TNR that cannot be classified according to the typology used in the previous section, because the victims form a group (quantity not specified) of Tibetans of mixed genders and locations; for example, when the article mentions a CCP-mandated spy infiltrating online groups of Tibetans living all over the world. For more detailed information, please refer to Chapter 2.



VI. RESULTS OF THE PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

We have identified four main trends among the cases described in primary sources:

1. Chinese authorities are seeking to further sever connections between Tibetans in exile and their relatives in Tibet by making communication technically impossible or dangerous.
2. Chinese authorities are spying on exiled Tibetans to collect personal information. This information can then be used to infiltrate and sabotage diaspora networks (including through disinformation campaigns), and/or as a basis for blackmail (see Trend 3). The Covid-19 pandemic has been instrumentalized to this end.
3. Chinese authorities in Tibet are seeking to control the behaviour of exiled Tibetans abroad (through direct intimidation and/or threats to their relatives), mostly coercing them into renouncing their activism.
4. Chinese authorities are seeking to undermine the livelihoods of exiled Tibetans, both in terms of material subsistence (e.g. forbidding money transfers from their relatives) and in terms of mental health (e.g. being told to stop attending cultural events such as teachings by the Dalai Lama).

• **TREND 1:** ***Severing connections***

Out of 84 respondents, 59 reported restrictions (or a complete breakdown) in their communications with their relatives in the following provinces: Nagchu City (13), Kardze TAP (11), Chamdo City (8), Shigatse City (8), Lhasa City (5), Dechen TAP (3), Lhoka City (2), Ngaba TAP (2), Tsolho TAP (2), Kanlho TAP (1), Yushu TAP (1), Unknown (3). The respondents are currently based in the following

countries: India (36), US (8), France (2), Switzerland (2), Nepal (1), Netherlands (1), Belgium (1), Australia (1), Unknown (7).

For Tibetans living abroad, it is becoming harder and harder to stay in touch with their families and friends in the region. Those going into exile today have no certainty of ever seeing their relatives again, nor of maintaining any meaningful communication with them. Those who are still in contact must refrain from sharing any personal information that the Chinese authorities could use against them (such as updates on the human rights situation in Tibet), for their conversations are carefully monitored at all times and across all platforms.

"I am still able to talk to my family in Tibet about mundane things, but contacts are minimal. I often hear about all communications being closely monitored, especially for families with relatives living in exile."

(Tenzin from Chamdo City, TAR, now living in India)

"Although I am still able to contact my family in Tibet, we must choose our words wisely and self-censor."

(Yeshe from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

"My mother had to ask the police for permission before contacting me, and she was not allowed to discuss anything beyond my well-being."

(Thupten from Ngaba TAP, now living in India)

The authorities also take advantage of family ties and friendships to extract personal information that will then be used against exiled Tibetans (see Trend 2):

"In March 2022, one of my brothers who lives in Tibet told me that our communication would be made easier if I sent a letter to the local Chinese authorities promising not to discuss or share any content related to political matters. I also had to provide my contact details, including my Indian phone number. I obeyed in the hope that my brother and I would be allowed to communicate on the phone."

(Drakpa from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

During times of year that are politically or culturally sensitive, such as the Tibetan New Year (Losar) or the March 10 anniversary, many exiled Tibetans cannot contact their relatives at all, lest the latter face persecution at the hands of the local Chinese authorities;⁴¹ for example, in March 2023, Chinese authorities in Tibet arrested a woman (Yangtso) for contacting outsiders amid an increase in surveillance and security searches ahead of the March 10 anniversary.⁴²

Furthermore, in many cases, communications have been severed all year round and indefinitely. It was established in March 2022 that among 215 Tibetans living in India surveyed by RFA's Tibetan Service, half (especially those who were politically active) had experienced a complete breakdown in contact with their relatives in Tibet in recent years.⁴³

From the point of view of the CCP, isolating Tibet from the rest of the world makes it harder (or impossible) for evidence of human rights abuses to reach the international community. This is the same reason why Tibet is only accessible via CCP-accredited tour agencies that orchestrate a staged visit. It also prevents Tibetans from getting outside help in fleeing the PRC, which lowers the chances of a successful escape. On a larger scale, severing the ties between the diaspora and their relatives in Tibet contributes to weakening the pro-Tibet movement, which is based on these solidarity networks.

The main incentives used by the CCP to discourage exiled Tibetans from contacting their relatives are threats to the physical integrity (e.g. detention and ill-treatment) and/or livelihoods (e.g. taking away their jobs or state subsidies) of the latter:

"The Chinese authorities in my hometown have always targeted those maintaining contacts with outsiders, but the restrictions have now reached unprecedented levels." **(Gelek from Shigatse City, TAR, now living in India)**

"I heard about a 60-year old woman from my hometown who was detained and disappeared

in 2021 after receiving a parcel from her children, who live abroad. Local authorities had urged her to come and pick up the parcel; she never returned."

(Yangchen Lhamo from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

"Households with exiled relatives are under close surveillance and frequently interrogated. There have been many instances where local Tibetans were detained and tortured for maintaining contacts with and sending money to outsiders. Nowadays, their exiled relatives have to be extra careful, even asking fellow Tibetans from said region not to share information with the media and other organisations. They self-censor in order to protect their relatives back in Tibet."

(Soepa from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

"In 2021, after one of my brothers got a job in the police, I spoke with him very briefly and the authorities immediately knew about it; they warned him that the next time he was found communicating with me, he would lose his job. My brother told me about this using someone else's phone, and asked me not to contact him anymore."

(Palden from Yushu TAP, now living in India)

"I have heard that those who are found maintaining contacts with exiled relatives are unable to obtain Khyimtho [i.e. ID cards, essential to access public services and other social security benefits] for their newborns. A person without an ID card is bound to face many problems. This is how they force Tibetans inside Tibet to cut off all contacts with the outside world."

(Yutso from Lhasa City, TAR; current location unknown)

"I have heard that Tibetans who maintain contacts with exiled relatives are barred from sending their children to government schools in Tibet. Therefore, I cannot contact my family members and acquaintances whose children attend those schools."

(Gakyi from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

"Many of my friends told me that these days, throughout Tibet, the Chinese authorities are increasingly threatening to cancel government welfare benefits to people who communicate with outsiders. The cancellation of state subsidies would push many Tibetans into poverty."

(Tenzin from Chamdo City, TAR, now living in India)

"Local authorities are now under greater pressure from their superiors to monitor and restrict communications between Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. It is no longer simply about punishing someone (with detention, beatings...) for maintaining contacts with outsiders; now, the basis for their livelihood, which is mainly government subsidies, is also taken away. Tibetans already live in impoverished conditions and have little options but to rely on government subsidies and other welfare benefits."

(Woeser from Chamdo City, TAR; current location unknown)

"Extreme restrictions are in place in Lhasa; specifically, those who maintain contacts with outsiders are subjected to intense interrogation and prosecution under the (false) pretext of leaking state secrets. If a household is hosting guests or if there is any sort of gathering, the police quickly arrive to interrogate those involved."

(Yangkey from Chamdo City, TAR, now living in India)

"The Chinese authorities in Lhasa have started entering private homes at any hour to conduct cell phone searches, so one can never be sure of who is holding the phone at any given time."
(Tsekyi Lhamo from Chamdo City, TAR, now living in India)

"For the past four years, my family has been under intense pressure from the Chinese authorities. All of my siblings are put under house arrest for at least two weeks every year in March. One of my nieces was not allowed to attend university entrance exams. Another of my nieces obtained a government job thanks to her knowledge and skills, but faced immense pressure and was eventually demoted for maintaining contact with me. Similarly, several families in my hometown were blacklisted because they were suspected of having stayed in contact with me."

(Golog Jigme from Kardze TAP, now living in Switzerland)

"I have not contacted my family in Tibet since 2016. I know that if I do contact them, then the authorities will stop them from harvesting caterpillar fungus (the primary source of livelihood in their area) or will ban their children from government schools (the only available mode of education). This poses a threat to the entire community. Earlier, if someone disobeyed the government, they alone would face consequences; nowadays, their entire family

and village face collective punishment. And now that China has started using a national voice biometric database, they can identify any individual simply by listening into conversations."

(NT from Nagchu City, now living in the US)

Exiled Tibetans have to resort to indirect communication methods to get updates about their family's health and well-being:

"I had to stop contacting my family in Tibet to protect them. I have not spoken to them in three years. Recently, a friend accepted to forward them photos and videos on my behalf."

(Kyizom from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

"I have stopped contacting my family directly. I sometimes post status updates and pictures, hoping that they will see them."

(Choedon from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

"I have not been able to contact my family for the past 6 or 7 years. I never hear from my family directly; I rely on other people to get updates regarding their well-being."

(Gedhun from Kardze TAP, now living in Belgium)

"I have not been able to contact my family for several years. I used to get updated via two of my brothers who live in Europe, but that avenue has been closed. These days, it doesn't matter whether you live in India or in other countries; the restrictions are equally severe everywhere."
(Nordon from Lhasa City, TAR, now living in India)

"I stopped hearing from my family and I stopped contacting them in order to protect them. We sometimes see each others' posts online, but we cannot react to them."

(Dhondup Tashi from Chamdo City, TAR, now living in India)

"In August 2022, when I learned about devastating floods happening in my hometown, I video-called my brother to check on my family. Ten minutes into the call, I stopped hearing him. I assumed that his battery had died. The next day, I tried to call him again, to no avail. I also tried to contact other relatives but no one responded. The day after that, my brother posted the following message: 'In this place, the sky is shrouded in darkness. Windows and doors remain tightly shut. The growth of midsummer azalea scrubs is forcibly halted, and voices are

forcefully suppressed, little sister.' My interpretation is that the darkness symbolises China's iron-fist oppression, and the tightly shut doors and windows allude to stringent surveillance."

(Dolma Karmo from Gansu Province, now living in Australia)

The CCP is also planting spies within Tibetan communities both in the PRC and abroad, to report any contacts between the two. Not only does this increase the risk of being found out, it also sows distrust and thereby undermines solidarity networks.

"The current restrictions in my hometown regarding those maintaining contacts with outsiders are unprecedented. I even heard about special spies whose job is to report Tibetans maintaining contacts with exiled relatives."
(Dorje from Shigatse City, TAR, now living in India)

"I have not been able to contact my family since 2017. In my hometown, there are spies everywhere, and the Chinese authorities are quick to conduct searches of personal phones, which leads to growing distrust within Tibetan communities."
(Yonten from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

"In my hometown, denouncing someone to the Chinese authorities for maintaining contacts with outsiders is rewarded with a cash prize worth about 100,000 Yuan."
(Dradul from Dechen TAP, now living in India)

• TREND 2: *Collecting personal information*

Out of 84 respondents, 32 had their personal information collected by Chinese authorities in the following provinces: Kardze TAP (9), Malho TAP (2), Golog TAP (1), Yushu TAP (1), Chamdo (4), Shigatse (1), Lhoka (1), Ngaba TAP (2), Nagchu (2), Dechen TAP (1), Tsolo TAP (1), Kanlho TAP (1), Lhasa (1), Unknown (5). The respondents themselves are currently based in the following countries: India (15), US (8), Australia (3), France (2), Netherlands (1), Belgium (1), Unknown (2).

While leaving the PRC may provide a feeling of relief and the impression of relative safety, many exiled Tibetans have realised that the CCP's surveillance apparatus extends far beyond the borders of China. It is a known fact that Chinese authorities are actively collecting personal

information about exiled Tibetans through direct extortion or espionage. In many cases, this involves spies planted by the CCP in overseas Tibetan communities, who both gather information and seek to influence diaspora members:

"The dibao⁴⁴ officials in our hometown are collecting everyone's contact details - including those of overseas relatives. My family was asked to provide my address and phone number, and I told them to do so."

(DK from Kanlho TAP, now living in Australia)

"All Tibetans who live outside Tibet should be extremely careful. In 2018, I went to Tibet to visit relatives. When I went to register my arrival at the local [UFWD] government office, I was asked various questions, and soon realised the authorities already knew all the answers in great detail. They knew where I had been to school, including the names of teachers and staff. If I lied, they would have known immediately. I know that there are many spies planted by the Chinese government in our exile Tibetan community. If Chinese officials in my remote and distant hometown know so much about our community in exile, then higher Chinese officials certainly know even more than that. After returning to India, I have become more cautious, always watching my back."

(Dechen from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

"I tried for many years to obtain a permit to return to Tibet, but in vain. A couple of years ago, police officers from the local Public Security Bureau visited my home and asked my family why I wanted to return and what I had been doing so far in India. Later, the police informed my family that they had learned from a source abroad that I had connections with a Tibetan activist organisation in India. Indeed, I had worked for about three months as a driver for a GuChuSum [i.e. a former political prisoners association] in India. I was shocked to find that Chinese authorities were able to collect information about my life in India in such detail."
(Tsundue from Malho TAP, now living in India)

"I used to use my Facebook account to share information that I collected through various individuals and social media platforms in Tibet. In 2020, I received a phone call from an unknown Indian mobile number. The caller said he belonged to some pro-Tibetan organisation and asked me questions about how I collected the information I shared, as well as my whereabouts and activities. Growing suspicious, I asked for proof that he indeed belonged to said

organisation. He never contacted me again. For safety reasons, I disconnected my number.”
(Rabsel from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

“The UFWD is known for its officers creating fake social media accounts to reach out to Tibetan exiles and monitor them. A friend of mine who visited Tibet alerted me to the Facebook account named ‘Snow Yak Tibet’, who is actually a UFWD Tibetan official. I checked his account and saw that he was friends with a lot of Tibetans, many of whom are leaders and activists in the exile Tibetan community.”
(SL, origin unknown; now living in the US)

“Officers from other Chinese departments such as the Public Security Bureau (PSB) also created fake social media accounts to monitor exiled Tibetans. I have also been alerted by someone in Tibet that the user behind the Facebook account named ‘Ley Wang’ [Karma in Tibetan] worked for the PSB. These accounts post pictures of the Dalai Lama and other content that the Tibetans typically like, in order to attract more friends in their online circles.”
(SK from Tsolo TAP, now living in Spain)

“I have created and been a part of many online groups. I have been blocked out of many groups, and some have been shut down. I have also received private messages from members telling me they had no choice but to leave the group. There is one group that I created that was never shut down, but not because the authorities were unable to do so or were unaware of its existence. Instead, they had infiltrated my phone number and were monitoring my activities online, getting information on what I posted, who my friends were, etc.”
(DD, origin unknown; now living in France)

“Then there are those Tibetans in Belgium who attend New Year parties hosted at the Chinese embassies. They actually act as intermediaries for the Chinese government by telling other Tibetans not to participate in 10 March anniversaries or other events. This is a new pressure tactic used by the Chinese government.”
(DM, origin unknown; now living in Belgium)

“In 2015, when a Tibetan man with EU citizenship visited Tibet, the local UFWD and State Security officials gave him a nice reception complete with a sumptuous feast. Before he left Tibet, he was called to the UFWD office, where he was given 1000 yuan and told to share important information when he found it

He was promised more money in the future. The man initially refused to accept the 1000 yuan but the officials persisted.”
(DM, origin unknown; now living in Belgium)

“Our group was shut down twice and, right now, we are running the third one. There are those in the group who chose to remain quiet out of fear of being identified by the Chinese censors, but they still want to stay part of the group. We have also had moles infiltrating our group, pretending to be friendly but trying to create discord among members by posting negative and polarising content.”
(LK from Malho TAP, now living in France)

“I was born in Nepal and then emigrated to Canada with my family, so I have no relatives in Tibet. Nevertheless, I have faced pressure due to my activism. I am thinking of the head of a new organisation called Canada File, a graduate of the University of Toronto who is known for his pro-Communist leanings. I cannot be certain of the nature of his connection to the CCP. He collected quite a lot of information about me by contacting various members of our community; for example, he learned that I worked for the New York-based Tibet Fund before coming to Canada and, knowing that the Tibet Fund is funded by the USAID, he concluded that I had connections with the US government and the CIA. He also knew about my work as a leading activist against the Chinese government in Canada.”
(ST from Nepal, now living in Canada)

In addition to digital communications being made increasingly difficult, the PRC authorities in Tibet coordinate with Chinese embassies and consulates overseas to monitor travel visa applications from exiled Tibetans who wish to visit their families. Again, they take advantage of interpersonal bonds to extract personal information that can potentially be weaponized:

“Tibetans seeking to apply for a travel visa to Tibet are treated differently to non-Tibetan applicants: even if they have obtained US or European citizenship, they are treated as ‘overseas Chinese’ and not as citizens of a foreign country. For example, Tibetan applicants have to provide additional documents that will be verified by local Chinese authorities, such as their family’s hukou (household registration ID). For Tibetans, the visa application process usually takes about six months; Chinese consulate officials attribute this delay to a lengthy ‘verification process’, meaning the

in-depth background checks carried out by MSS officials at all administrative levels (village, county, and province)."

(Thupten Gyatso, origin unknown; now living in France)

"At the visa interview, the Chinese staff member asks about Tibetan public gatherings such as protests, rallies, birthdays of the Dalai Lama, such as how often these events are held, who the organisers are and who pays for these events."

(SL, origin unknown; now living in the US)

"Last year, I helped someone fill in the documents to apply for a visa to Tibet. Earlier, one just needed to provide a biography, about a paragraph long. But now one has to provide a lengthy personal statement detailing how one first came into exile from Tibet, whether on foot or by vehicle; how the person arrived in the US; who paid for the journey. Earlier, it could be written in Tibetan; now it has to be in either Chinese or English. A Tibetan family in California was even asked to provide copies of their tax returns filed in the US. The consulate knew the name of the family's dog."

(KK, origin unknown; now living in the US)

Obtaining personal information enables Chinese authorities to track the movements of exiled Tibetans and impersonate them online, leading to the potential infiltration and sabotage of diaspora networks. It also allows CCP-affiliated agents to follow and intimidate the victims, often blackmailing them by weaponising their relatives in Tibet (see Trend 3).

The Covid-19 pandemic has been instrumentalized to this end:

"I recently learned that restrictions have increased in my hometown, apparently due to the government's zero-Covid policy; in this case, the pandemic is used as a pretext to conduct random cellphone searches."

(Ngawang Dorje from Kardze TAP; current location unknown)

"My family and I have not been in touch since the beginning of the Covid crisis, when the authorities implemented systematic cell phone probing."

(Nyima Tso from Shigatse City, TAR, now living in India)

"I am a former Tibetan political prisoner. It has been 5 years since I arrived in Australia, where I

used to advocate actively for the cause of Tibet. During that time, despite Chinese authorities having interrogated my family members many times back in my hometown in Tibet, they remained unable to obtain any information about my whereabouts. But last year, the authorities conducted an investigation of all the local Tibetans legally registered in my hometown. To ensure that I would remain in the family register, and that my family would continue receiving state subsidies, my family was asked to provide my Covid vaccination certificate. With no option in sight, I had to send said document, which includes all my personal details, including my photo and current address. Now that they have all this information, I am unable to take part in activism because I am concerned that they would harm my family."

(Migyur from Kardze TAP, now living in Australia)

Attempts to sabotage diaspora networks often involve the infiltration of communities by CCP-affiliated spies and other informants, but they can also be embedded within institutional frameworks:

"For several years now, the Tibetan community in Toronto has been staging protests every Wednesday⁴⁵ outside the Chinese Consulate. After Covid, when the Chinese consulate began re-issuing visas, we noticed that Tibetan applicants were getting called in for visa interviews on Wednesdays only. As a result, there are awkward meetings between Tibetan protesters and visa applicants outside the consulate. This is a deliberate attempt to sow discord among the local Tibetan community."

(KP, origin unknown; now living in Canada)

Another manipulation technique used by Chinese authorities is to circulate rumours that they know will reach exiled Tibetan communities:

"I tried for the longest time to obtain a permit to visit Tibet and get the chance to see my ageing parents one last time. In 2021, a rumour circulated in Tibet and India saying that any exiled Tibetan who wished to return permanently to Tibet should submit their names and other details to relevant local Chinese authorities. [TCHRD can prove that Chinese authorities deliberately spread this rumour to steal personal information about Tibetan exiles with relatives in Tibet] Even some local officials verified the information as true. Therefore, I submitted my name, photo, phone number and current address to the Chinese authorities through my family in Tibet. I have not heard

anything from the authorities since. Meanwhile, I learned through other sources that my father had died.”

(Thinley from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

These rumours include campaigns of disinformation, often online, that seek to discredit exiled individuals and organisations.

“Whenever I travel for advocacy work, I find derogatory posts about me on Facebook, such being labelled a ‘running dog of the separatist Dalai clique.’ There are also those faceless and nameless people trying to defame me by calling me a Chinese spy.”

(Golog Jigme from Kardze TAP, now living in Switzerland)

“When I wrote an article some years ago on the series of self-immolation protests in Tibet, the Chinese authorities were quick to translate my article into Chinese interpreting it as a guide to incite self-immolations. Since I had worked for a long time in the exile Tibetan community as a teacher, parliamentarian, and CTA staff, they said the exile Tibetan government was behind the article, and that I was a spokesperson for them. As a result of this UF tactic, I received a letter from the exile Tibetan parliament telling me to refrain from writing such articles in future. Later someone from the Kashag (exile Tibetan Cabinet) came to Paris and relayed a message from the Sikyong (CTA President) asking me to exercise caution when writing such articles.”

(LT, origin unknown; now living in France)

Chinese authorities also seek to extort personal information about exiled Tibetans by interrogating their relatives in Tibet:

“I have not been able to contact my family in Tibet for quite some time. When I last visited them years ago, I had to leave immediately. Soon after, the local police questioned them about me. To this day, my nephews and nieces told me they still get periodic visits from the local police asking about my whereabouts.”

(Zompa from Lhoka City, now living in India)

“Last year [2022], local Chinese authorities summoned my family members to ask them about my whereabouts. They told my family that I had apparently obtained Indian citizenship, which, if true, would entail my exclusion from the family register and my renouncement of Chinese citizenship. To avoid these outcomes, the authorities ordered my family to provide evidence that I had not taken

Indian citizenship. I thus submitted copies of my Registration Certificate [i.e. the identification issued by the Indian government to Tibetan refugees] and Green Book [i.e. ID cards issued by the Tibetan government in exile to Tibetan refugees] through my family, explaining that it would have been impossible for me to retain those two documents had I obtained Indian citizenship.”

(Namgyal from Yushu TAP, now living in India)

“Someone told the Chinese authorities that I had acquired Indian citizenship. When the rumour spread, my family was repeatedly called in for questioning. They stated that they had not heard from me for several years. As a result, the authorities removed the social benefits associated with my national identification number, claiming they would reinstate them if my family can prove my whereabouts.”

(Ngodup from Dechen TAP, now living in India)

“A few years ago, one of the pre-conditions for my sister getting employed by the Chinese government was for her to provide my contact details. She got scared and told our father, who tried to allay the suspicions of the authorities by telling them I was not involved in any political activities and was just living my life as an ordinary US resident. It was true and the authorities knew it, but it was not enough for them: they consider the mere fact that a Tibetan is living in exile as sufficient grounds to target that person for investigation.”

(KK, origin unknown; now living in the US)

Exiled Tibetans visiting Tibet are also at risk of undergoing lengthy interrogations aiming to extort personal information about other diaspora members:

“I have personally never returned to Tibet since coming into exile, because I know what it entails. Upon arrival, I would have to report to and be interrogated at the local United Front office, potentially for days on end. While some may not face too much restriction, others have been subjected to ‘soft detention’ for up to a week (i.e. further questioning and verification in all-expenses paid lodges or hotels). They would ask whether I have taken part in any protests, shouted slogans for Tibetan independence, or carried Tibetan flags. They would also try to gather intelligence on prominent Tibetan activists living abroad, and ask for contact information for members of Tibetan associations abroad or representatives of the Offices of Tibet. Thus, local Chinese authorities attempt to

extract as much information as possible from Tibetans visiting Tibet on temporary visas.”

(Thupten Gyatso, origin unknown; now living in France)

• **TREND 3:**

Blackmail and other forms of intimidation

Out of 84 respondents, 49 received threats of harm to their relatives in Tibet in the following provinces: Nagchu (10), Kardze TAP (9), Chamdo (6), Shigatse (5), Lhasa (4), Tsolo TAP (3), Malho TAP (1), Golog TAP (1), Dechen TAP (1), Yushu TAP (1), Lhoka (1), Ngaba TAP (1), Kanlho TAP (1), Unknown (5). The respondents themselves are currently based in the following countries: India (22), US (8), Australia (3), Switzerland (2), Canada (3), France (2), Nepal (1), Belgium (1), Unknown (7).

Chinese authorities use diverse methods to control the behaviour of exiled Tibetans abroad (including online), mostly coercing them into renouncing their activism. The most common method seems to be to threaten the victim's relatives in Tibet. In other cases, disengaging from political activities is a necessary condition to obtain a visa to visit one's family in Tibet.

“After having been imprisoned in Tibet for three years for publishing a book criticising Chinese policies, I arrived in Australia in 2017 under the political prisoner rehabilitation project. I recently heard that my family in Tibet had been interrogated numerous times by Chinese authorities, and the authorities now know everything about me. As a result, my family members keep urging me to behave; I have to be more careful because I do not want the authorities to harm my family members.”
(Tsepa Kyab from Malho TAP, now living in Australia)

“In 2021, I received a video call from one of my siblings in Tibet. When I picked up the call, I found out that they were calling from the local police station, surrounded by half of our family members as well as two police officers. The police officers urged me to behave well abroad, and to refrain from engaging in activities that could go against Chinese policies. Further, I was asked not to instigate my relatives in Tibet in any way, and not to post or share any political content on social media. If I failed to obey, the officers said my relatives would suffer consequences.”

(Dhonden from Kardze TAP, now living in Switzerland)

“Those among my nephews and nieces who are attending schools in Chinese cities must hand over their mobile phones to the school authorities for periodic searches. For this reason, I must refrain from posting or sharing any sensitive information to an online profile that those children can access, because the Chinese school authorities would see it, and there would likely be consequences for our shared relatives.”

(Yeshe from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

“When exiled Tibetan advocates return to Tibet on a short-term visa, local Chinese authorities threaten them before they leave the region: ‘From now on, you must behave and stop participating in political activities. You have to understand that all your family members are here, in our hands, and that we can do anything we want.’ Having lived in France for 25 years, I have seen many Tibetans (all of them citizens of European countries) suddenly give up activism upon returning from Tibet. This has been happening since the 2000s. They become too scared to take part in any demonstrations or rallies, or even non-political gatherings such as picnics or religious celebrations for the Dalai Lama's birthday.”

(Thupten Gyatso, origin unknown; now living in France)

“My family in Tibet has been receiving calls from the local Chinese police. At one point, a group of UFDW officials visited my home and interrogated my family members. After this, my younger brother, who is a government employee, called me to ask me to stop my advocacy work. He said, ‘I don't know how much benefit you get from doing this but it is doing great harm to us.’ Just last week (early June 2023), some officials came to my wife's family home, where her mother lives alone. They told her to advise her daughter and son-in-law to stay silent and stop speaking against the Chinese government.”

(Gyal Lo, origin unknown; now living in Canada)

“When I was president of a Tibetan association in Canada, I asked a young man to take on an executive position, as he had previously succeeded in a similar role and had good leadership qualities. But he refused because his parents in Tibet had received visits from the local police showing them photos of him at some public event hosted by our association; they were told to call their son and tell him to stop working for us, lest they face consequences for his actions.”

(KP, origin unknown; now living in Canada)

"Many Tibetans used to stage protests and hunger strikes in front of the UN and Chinese Consulate buildings in New York, but they stopped. This is happening in Tibetan communities all over the world. I believe the two main reasons for this drastic change are (1) they want to get a visa to visit their relatives in Tibet, and (2) they don't want the latter to face any reprisals at the hands of local Chinese authorities."

(DL from Nagchu, now living in the US)

"About six years ago, a Tibetan activist in Switzerland (a former executive member of the Swiss Tibetan association and of Chushi Gangdruk), who was a Swiss citizen, tried three times to apply for a visa to visit his elderly mother in Tibet. On his third attempt, he was told by a Consulate official that if he gave up activism and stopped taking part in anti-China protests and rallies, not only would he get the visa but the Chinese government would also cover part of his travel expenses. He refused."

(DL from Nagchu, now living in the US)

"Some of us who tried to apply for a visa to Tibet were rejected multiple times. The Chinese Consulate staff ended up telling us what it would take to get the visa: if we wanted to see our family in Tibet, we would have to stop participating in political activities or attending the events of visiting Tibetan personalities, such as the religious teachings given by the Dalai Lama or speeches given by Tibetan political leaders."

(TD from Nagchu, now living in the Netherlands)

"Nowadays, when a Tibetan visitor leaves Tibet, they must nominate a Chinese government employee in Tibet to act as a guarantor ensuring that they will not engage in any activities detrimental to the CCP's interests upon their return overseas. The guarantor must not be related to the applicant, but can be a friend or other acquaintance - generally Tibetan themselves. A friend of mine recently visited Tibet and witnessed shocking human rights violations there. When I asked him to share them with me, he excused himself and said, 'Whatever I know I have to keep private, because I cannot betray the trust of two people in Tibet who agreed to act as my guarantors when I applied for the visa.'"

(SL, origin unknown; now living in the US)

These are not empty threats; multiple testimonies demonstrate that Chinese authorities do not hesitate to harm the victim's relatives, sometimes with no prior warning:

"I became a political prisoner when I protested against the Chinese government in Tibet. My family is frequently harassed by local Chinese authorities asking about me. In 2018, police officers came to my home and forcibly took away my 69-year old mother, who was detained for 14 days and subjected to intense interrogation. She was ordered to divulge information about my whereabouts. Both my sister, who used to work as a nurse, and her husband, who works for a mining company, were fired from their jobs. All these things happened not because my family members had committed any crimes, but solely to put pressure on me."

(Lhakpa from Golog TAP; current location unknown)

"In 2019, I posted photos and teaching of the Dalai Lama on my WeChat account, through which I was in contact with many acquaintances in Tibet. As a result, my elderly father was called at the local police station for interrogation, and my WeChat account was shut down."

(Thubdo from Kardze TAP; current location unknown)

Although the pressure put on the families of exiled Tibetans by Chinese authorities generally takes the form of threats, some were presented with seemingly positive incentives (such as money, gifts, and promises of employment) in exchange for bringing their relatives back to Tibet. This strategy still amounts to manipulation and, for the incentives to be attractive, relies heavily on the government's systematic impoverishment of Tibetan communities.

"Local Chinese authorities also make unannounced visits to families in Tibet whose children are studying or working overseas. The parents are constantly pressured to bring their children back and make sure they do not get married abroad, as that would lessen their chance of returning. Sometimes, parents are asked to provide the contact details of their children, so that the authorities can contact them directly to pressure them into coming back. To reassure the parents, they are told that the children would be handed lucrative job opportunities from the Chinese government. One of my colleagues at Radio Free Asia whose job is to get information from Tibet had to stop promoting his latest report because of pressure on his relatives in Tibet."

(SL, origin unknown; now living in the US)

"In 2007, a friend of mine was working as a driver at the CTA's Department of Home in Dharamsala. His parents in Riwoche County (Chamdo, TAR) received repeated visits from local Chinese police telling them that their son was living a hard life with a driver's salary and could barely make ends meet. They were asked to call him home, with a promise of financial help from the government for all travel expenses, as well as further financial assistance to the family after his return. The parents obeyed but my friend refused to comply and kept working for the CTA. For the following three years, the local authorities continued to pester the parents with the same request over and over again. My friend finally left the job and moved to another country, but I can't say for sure if it was because of what happened to his parents."

(AG from Chamdo, now living in the US)

Some exiled Tibetans refuse to renounce their activism despite threats to themselves and their family, as an act of resistance against Chinese authoritarianism:

"A few years ago, the situation became really dire in our hometown, and I tried my best to spread information about it. Some of my relatives were imprisoned for having contacted me; for example, in January 2022, one of my brothers was detained. I am aware that Chinese authorities are resorting to these tactics in order to silence me. However, when Tibetans inside Tibet risk their lives to collect data about the situation in Tibet and send it to me, it inspires me to try my best to share this crucial information with the international community, regardless of reprisals at the hands of the Chinese government."

(Thubgah from Kardze TAP, now living in India)

"I have been actively travelling for the past two years to promote my report on colonial boarding schools; because of this, my family in Tibet has come under pressure from the Chinese authorities. Recently, my younger brother who is a government employee was blackmailed by his boss into trying to dissuade me from continuing my advocacy work - lest he lose his job. After exchanging the usual pleasantries and asking about each other's health and wellbeing, my brother said, 'Please stop talking to foreign media and give up your advocacy work. It will be bad for both you and us.' I knew he was pressured into calling me and saying these things. I suggested he just tell the authorities

that he has no idea what I am doing abroad. I do not care what the Chinese authorities think and I will not give up my work because of what has happened and is still happening in Tibet. We cannot remain silent about the Chinese government's repression just to protect our family members in Tibet or obtain a visa to visit them. So many of our people have been imprisoned or killed in the past six decades, including by self-immolation."

(Gyal Lo, origin unknown; now living in Canada)

"Personally, I have been very clear about where I stand and how I fight off Chinese pressure: I simply don't keep contact with my relatives in Tibet. I have not spoken with my family since 2007. I made this sacrifice when I became an executive member of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) in Dharamsala, in order to serve the Tibetan freedom struggle. (...) In New York, I met a female Tibetan activist whose two brothers had been imprisoned in Tibet for political activities. One of the brothers had a daughter, and she was not allowed to apply for university admission in Tibet due to her father's situation. In spite of this, the female Tibetan activist called the wives of her imprisoned brothers to tell them how precious their husbands' sacrifice was, stating: 'Whatever happens, whether or not they die in prison, you must never regret the sacrifice they made.' This story gives me hope for our movement: there are still people who are willing to make the big sacrifices that are crucial in countering Chinese pressure and influence."

(DL from Nagchu, now living in the US)

Others recognize that committing such acts of resistance is easier for those who have no relatives at risk of becoming weaponized by the Chinese authorities:

"Those with no family to look after have more freedom, because they are less vulnerable to threats of retaliation against third parties, which makes it more difficult for the Chinese authorities to control them. De facto, these are the people who help us obtain information about the situation in Tibet."

(Samten from Nagchu City, TAR; current location unknown)

Applying for a travel permit to Tibet is not only difficult, it is also risky: Chinese authorities can take advantage of one's desire to visit their relatives to attempt to trap them in Tibet.

"For many years, I struggled to get a permit to visit Tibet, which I finally obtained in 2019. But one of the conditions of the permit was that I would have to stay in Tibet permanently, with no option to return to India. So I chose not to go."

(Mipham from Yushu TAP, now living in India)

"There was one case in which a Tibetan US resident almost lost his Green Card to the Chinese authorities while travelling to Tibet. It took him almost six months to get it back, with an intervention from the US authorities."

(AG from Chamdo, now living in the US)

Another form of intimidation used by the Chinese authorities is to harass exiled Tibetans as they attend events pertaining to human rights advocacy, especially those hosted by the United Nations:

"During my first ever visit to the UN, attending the March 2015 HRC session in Geneva, another Tibetan representing the CTA advised me to take caution, and the pervasiveness of the Chinese surveillance of Tibetans became clear to me. Wherever I went, I was being followed by a Chinese man carrying a bag. One day, as I was having tea at the canteen of the Palais des Nations, I saw him trying to record footage of me from different angles. I was being interviewed by a Reuters journalist who was just asking me if I had ever been followed; I pointed out the Chinese man, and told the journalist that he had been following me everywhere. The journalist tried to approach the man but he managed to flee the scene. Later, this incident became a huge issue, and it was reported in the news; even the Chinese Foreign Ministry had to issue a statement. Since then, I have encountered similar experiences whenever I participate in any conference or advocacy initiative."

(Golog Jigme from Kardze TAP, now living in Switzerland)

Exiled Tibetans are also surveilled, followed, and harassed in their everyday life:

"This year (2023), I took part in the 10 March anniversary protest in front of the Chinese embassy in Brussels, and I noticed that the number of surveillance cameras around the embassy compound had increased compared to the previous year.

There are also some high-tech rotating cameras, used to take images of Tibetan protesters who would then be refused visas if they ever applied to visit their families in Tibet. It's a similar situation at the Chinese embassy in the Netherlands."

(DM, origin unknown; now living in Belgium)

"One time, at the Zurich train station, I noticed a Chinese man taking pictures of me; when I turned to face him, he immediately fled. Similarly, there is a park near my house in Zurich where I used to go for evening walks. I often noticed an electronic device flying above me and just assumed it was some children's toy. But in August 2021, as I was leaving the park, I noticed the device following me home; it was still there when I reached my doorstep. Concerned, I reached out for my phone to take a picture of it, and the device instantly left. I now realise it was a drone. Until then, I had no idea about drone surveillance."

(Golog Jigme from Kardze TAP, now living in Switzerland)

"A few years ago, a Tibetan man from my hometown told me not to visit Tibet because the local Chinese authorities were keeping a close eye on my movements and activities. He is now living in Europe, but at the time he was working for a small restaurant in Kathmandu. One day, two people drove up to him and said they would take him to his brother who had fled Tibet. He believed them and got into the car, which took him to Tatopani, near the Nepal-Tibet border, where he was threatened by several Chinese officers urging him to keep a low profile and not engage in any anti-China activities. He was also asked to provide information about Tibetan exiles from our hometown, including me, regarding our current jobs and whereabouts."

(MT from Tsolo TAP, now living in the US)

"In November 2023, I attended protests in San Francisco, where Xi Jinping was visiting for the APEC Summit. Despite my prior experience of transnational repression at the hands of the CCP [see p. 30], I was not expecting to get physically attacked in broad daylight during a peaceful protest. Pro-CCP trained personnels tried to pull our banner from underneath us and later stole it by ambushing us. The counter-protesters were trying to hit us on the head and I got a bruised chin from a filled water bottle they threw at me.

Covered under a big red Chinese flag, they punched me, pulled my hair, hit me on the head multiple times, attacked me with their flagpole, and threw my phone in the gutter to get rid of the evidence. This is a testament to how comfortable the CCP feels conducting criminal activities in free, open societies.”

(Chemi Lhamo, origin unknown; now living in Canada)

• **TREND 4:**

Undermining livelihoods

Out of 84 respondents, 10 reported having suffered a direct financial impact due to TNR. They have ties to the following provinces: Nagchu (4), Dechen TAP (1), Shigatse (2), Kardze TAP (1), Kanlho TAP (1), Chamdo (1). The respondents themselves are currently based in the following countries: India (6), US (3), Nepal (1).

Going into exile tends to entail a stage of economic precarity - the cost of organising one's border crossing and journey to a safe destination, but also the administrative and living costs when settling into a new country where one may not have the right to work immediately. For this reason, while they wait for their new situation to stabilise, exiled Tibetans often rely on money sent by their relatives back in Tibet. By closing this avenue, Chinese authorities seek to impoverish and disempower exiled Tibetans, certainly limiting their capacity for political and cultural advocacy, potentially giving them no choice but to return to Tibet.

“In my hometown, there are serious consequences (such as intense interrogations and beatings in detention) for those maintaining contacts with and sending money to exiled relatives. Many of us are facing the same situation.”

(Yonten from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

“In the past two or three years, it has become impossible to contact my family in Tibet. My relatives have also stopped sending me money. The restrictions on sending money from Tibet to India are more severe than for other destinations, so they might be able to send the money via other countries.”

(Lodoe from Dechen TAP, now living in India)

“I used to receive money from my family in Tibet, but now there are lots of restrictions in my hometown. Those who are found communicating with outsiders are interrogated and detained, and sending money abroad is

considered an even greater offence. I recently wanted to travel to India to attend the religious teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but I was not able to afford the trip.”

(Dolkar from Shigatse City, TAR; now living in Nepal)

“Many exiled monks, nuns, and students from my hometown are facing financial problems because they can no longer receive money from their families in Tibet.”

(Rabten from Nagchu City, TAR, now living in India)

The Chinese authorities also push exiled Tibetans to leave their advocacy-related jobs in order for them to obtain a visa to visit their relatives, or to ensure the safety of the latter:

“A leader of the Tibetan association in Belgium shared that the local Chinese consulate had spread a rumour among the Tibetan community: in order to obtain visas to visit their families in Tibet, Tibetans would have to resign from the association's executive board and abstain from taking part in any public events such as protests or rallies. As a consequence, many of their executive leaders resigned.”

(TK from Kanlho TAP, now living in the US)

“A female staff member at DIIR (CTA) faced so much pressure that she was eventually forced to resign from her job. In 2011, she received a phone call from her brother in Tibet asking for them to meet in Nepal. When she arrived, he was with two Chinese government officials who had paid for an expensive hotel room for him. They tried to persuade her to work as an informant for the Chinese government in parallel to her job at DIIR. They told her that if she became a mole for the government, they would take care of all the needs of her elderly mother and other family members in Tibet. They also presented her with a brand new laptop, mobile phone, and other devices, all of which she refused. Then, they threatened to take her to Tibet through the Nepal border without any documentation. The woman later realised that the authorities had first come to know about her after she sent money to her mother in Tibet, which was soon after she had joined DIIR: the authorities quickly realised that they could use the elderly mother to get what they wanted from the daughter, and promptly asked her brother to call her for the meeting in Nepal. This is just one example of how Chinese government agents try to infiltrate the exile community. Upon her return to Dharamsala, she continued receiving emails

from the officials asking her to work for them. There are many cases such as this one in the CTA; many are too scared to speak out for fear of harming their families and relatives in Tibet, and many quietly leave their jobs because of the constant pressure from Chinese agents.”

(JM from Lhasa, now living in the US)

“My friend used to work as a newsreader for the DIIR’s Tibet TV and her parents faced extreme pressure from local Chinese authorities to make her leave the job, which she was finally forced to do.”

(NL from Kardze TAP, now living in the US)

Various threats from the CCP seek to discourage exiled Tibetans from attending cultural events, such as Buddhist teachings and other religious ceremonies. By taking away their right to enjoy their culture as part of the diaspora community, the Chinese authorities are undermining the mental health of exiled Tibetans, which can have long-term material repercussions. Not being able to contact one’s friends and family, and the fear of them being in danger as a result of one’s own actions can also have psychological repercussions.

Thupten Gyatso specified that, upon returning from Tibet, many Tibetans “become too scared to take part in any demonstrations or rallies, or even non-political gatherings such as picnics or religious celebrations for the Dalai Lama’s birthday.” (see full testimony in Trend 3)

“A friend of mine who was quite active in exile Tibetan organisations in the US almost disappeared from public view after his return from a short visit to Tibet. He told me he could not remain as active as he used to be because UFDW had been harassing him since his return from Tibet, which took a toll on his mental wellbeing.”

(MT from Tsolho TAP, now living in the US)

“I feel great psychological pressure and suffer from bouts of depression. Knowing that people close to me who are still in Tibet are being monitored and harassed makes me very sad.”

(DM, origin unknown; now living in Belgium)

“I am someone who is directly affected by TNR because all my family and relatives are in Tibet. Like everyone, I always wish to speak with or meet my parents, and the fact that I cannot has inflicted me with a deep psychological wound, which cannot be healed easily. I have not been able to help my parents, even though it’s now time for me to do so since they are in the final

years of their life. This is an internal struggle that all of us - especially those with family in Tibet - experience on a daily basis.” (TR, origin unknown; now living in the US)

“I have not been able to contact any of my childhood friends back in Tibet since 2015. They deleted me from their contact lists. These were my childhood friends with whom I had grown up, and to be cut off like that devastated me.” (SL, origin unknown; now living in the US)

“Upon discussion with my friends who have relatives in Tibet (whether they were able to visit them or not), we realised that many of us have something in common: we get recurring nightmares of joyous reunions with family members that end with Chinese government agents following us. We wake up not wanting to go back to sleep, because we don’t want to experience fear and anxiety even in our dreams.”

(TR, origin unknown; now living in the US)



VII. RESULTS OF THE SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

We have identified four main trends among the cases described in secondary sources:

1. The collaboration between the Chinese government and foreign authorities - mainly Nepal, which is a particularly critical location as the main exit point for those fleeing Tibet (see TCHRD's report on the topic), but also sporadically certain Western states such as Denmark and Switzerland.
2. The infiltration of Tibetan diaspora communities by agents (with various ties to the CCP) who spy, censor, and spread disinformation in an aim to disrupt and weaken solidarity networks. This includes the sabotage of Tibet-related events as well as social media propaganda campaigns.
3. Cyberattacks and other threats pertaining to cybersecurity, targeting both Tibetan institutions (e.g. the CTA's website was hacked) and individual diaspora members (e.g. personal information is routinely extracted via WeChat).
4. The collaboration between the Chinese government and foreign universities - whether at institutional level (e.g. academic publishers censoring Tibet-related content) or at student level (e.g. Chinese students recruited to spy on their classmates).

• TREND 1:

Collaborating with foreign authorities

- On June 21, 2011, twelve Tibetans were arrested and detained by the Nepalese police in Kathmandu for taking part in a vigil organised in solidarity with demonstrators in Tibet.⁴⁶
- On November 10, 2011, spokesman for Nepal's Home Ministry declared that the government was considering revoking "all the rights granted to Tibetans residing in Nepal".⁴⁷
- Under Chinese pressure, the Foreign Ministry of Denmark prevented anti-Beijing demonstrations (including by Tibetan activists) during Chinese state visits in 2012 and 2013.⁴⁸
- In March 2014, nine Tibetans (Sonam Tashi, Sonam Chodung, Kansang Poldon, Mingma, Apa, Jigned Lama, Suzil Lama, Tanzim Padma, Padma Dolma) were arrested in Kathmandu for "suspicious behaviour" ahead of the anniversary of Tibet Uprising Day.⁴⁹
- In November 2016, the Nepalese police arrested and detained 41 Tibetans trying to cross the border into India. Authorities stated that an investigation would be conducted on how they had entered Nepal in order to determine if they are "genuine refugees" (in which case they would be handed over to the UNHCR); if not, they would be deported back to China.⁵⁰
- In 2017, the Swiss authorities arrested 32 Tibetan protestors during a state visit to Bern by Xi Jinping.⁵¹
- In March 2018, Adak, a Tibetan activist in Nepal, was detained for 10 days and threatened with deportation to Tibet for posting a photo on Facebook in which he posed with the Tibetan national flag near the Boudha stupa in Kathmandu.⁵²
- In March 2018, on the eve of a meeting between Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping, the Indian

government issued a directive prohibiting local officials from attending events organised by the CTA to mark the 60 years in exile of the Dalai Lama.^{53 54}

- A 2019 article mentions prior instances of TNR against Tibetans in Switzerland, including Chinese representatives dissuading Swiss politicians from officially welcoming the Dalai Lama during a visit to Switzerland; and the Chinese ambassador to Switzerland setting up a meeting with the Swiss parliament at the same time it was supposed to receive Tibetan groups (the Tibetan event was cancelled as a result).⁵⁵
- In 2019, two Chinese officials responsible for Tibet warned Indian reporters against their government's recognition of the Dalai Lama's chosen successor.⁵⁶
- In May 2019, under Chinese pressure, the Nepalese government ordered an investigation into three state-employed journalists who published a report about the Dalai Lama's stay in an Indian hospital.⁵⁷
- In June 2019, Penpa Tsering, a US citizen of Tibetan origin, was deported from Nepal after being mistaken for someone whose name was on a blacklist provided by China to Nepalese authorities.⁵⁸
- The government of Nepal banned a public celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday in Kathmandu on July 6, 2019, with Nepalese police gathered in riot gear at the Boudha stupa to block any gatherings of Tibetans.⁵⁹
- In September 2019, Nepal handed over six Tibetan refugees to the Chinese police shortly after they crossed the China-Nepal border.⁶⁰
- In October 2019, ahead of a planned visit by Xi Jinping (the first visit from a Chinese president since 1996), Nepal restricted the return from India of 33 Tibetan delegates.⁶¹ To prevent demonstrations, the Nepalese police also closed Buddhist monasteries and took 27 Tibetans into temporary custody.⁶² It was during this visit that a confidential agreement was signed whereby Nepal agreed to deport back to China the Tibetan refugees who would arrive from then onwards.⁶³ In addition, the two countries signed a treaty opening the door for China to intervene in matters related to Tibetans living in Nepal, increasing the vulnerability of those who express their political views or cultural identity.⁶⁴
- In October 2019, ahead of an India-China Summit in Tamil Nadu, the Indian police arrested and detained 42 Tibetans – some of whom were planning to hold a protest.⁶⁵
- In March 2020, ten municipalities in Switzerland received a letter from the cantonal government of Vaud asking them to refrain from raising the Tibetan flag on Tibetan Uprising Day, upon written request from the local Chinese ambassadors. Nine municipalities went ahead whereas one complied with the message to discontinue.⁶⁶
- In 2015, Switzerland and China signed an agreement allowing Chinese security officials access to personal information about asylum seekers assumed to be Chinese nationals. This document was never officially published. It attracted more attention when it came up for renewal in August 2020, prompting concerns that it may be used to expel Tibetans.⁶⁷ The public backlash following this revelation prompted the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration to let the arrangement expire in December 2020 without renewing it.⁶⁸
- In December 2020, five Nepal-based Tibetans (including RFA journalist Dorjee Gyaltsen Gurung and Settlement Officer Choejor) were detained by the Nepalese police for taking part in secret elections related to the upcoming Sikyong (Presidential) and Chithue (Parliamentary) elections. When the Tibetan community had held the 2011 elections openly, local police had confiscated the ballots. In 2016, the elections had been held successfully by the Tibetan administration without any arrests.⁶⁹
- Thomas Büchli, President of the Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Society, stated in 2020 that the Chinese embassy routinely sought to prevent or disrupt the organisation of pro-Tibetan events in Switzerland through written requests, phone calls, and in-person visits to local authorities.⁷⁰
- Nepal only "noted" (rather than "accepted") recommendations it received in January 2021 regarding its treatment of Tibetan refugees as part of its third UPR Cycle.⁷¹
- In September 2021, Tibetans living in Nepal observed Tibet's Democracy Day (i.e., the anniversary of the seating of Tibet's first India-based Parliament-in-exile) under close watch by local police, who kept the gatherings out of the public eye for fear of offending China.⁷²

- In October 2021, the Athenian police detained a Tibetan (Tsela Zoksang) and a Hong Kong activist (Joey Siu) who were campaigning for a boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics on human rights grounds.⁷³ The two activists were held in a prison cell for 24 hours. During her detention, the Greek police received phone calls and messages from the Chinese Consulate in Athens pressuring them to prolong the detention, to charge them with a more serious crime, and even to extradite Joey Siu back to Hong Kong.⁷⁴
- In its annual report published in August 2023, the United Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) accused Nepal of violating the religious freedom of the Tibetan Buddhist community.⁷⁵

The most straightforward evidence of the complicity of foreign governments in CCP-led TNR is their ratification of an extradition treaty with the PRC. As of January 2023, China had ratified extradition treaties with 45 countries, including France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain. Notable exceptions are the US, the UK, Canada, and India.⁷⁶ The most striking example is probably that of Nepal. Formerly a safe haven for Tibetans fleeing China, Nepal stopped granting refugee status to Tibetans in the mid-1990s due to increasing pressure from Beijing, and the situation has been deteriorating ever since.⁷⁷

Political and economic factors have made Nepal more vulnerable to Chinese pressure, starting with the rise of Communist parties on Nepal's unstable political scene.⁷⁸ Nepal also strengthened its ties with the PRC as a result of the six-month blockade of the Indo-Nepalese border in 2015, which resulted from political unrest following the adoption of the new Nepalese constitution.⁷⁹ However, the most decisive element has been China's colossal investment in multiple sectors of the Nepalese economy, from hydropower to tourism - also distributing aid after the 2015 earthquake - which culminated with Nepal joining the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017. Not only do these investments benefit China by granting it direct land access to the emerging markets of South Asia,⁸⁰ but they also came with significant strings attached: Kathmandu's pledge to endorse Beijing's "One-China Policy" by prohibiting "anti-Chinese activities" within Nepal.⁸¹ The two countries also signed intelligence-sharing agreements⁸² and China partially funded the reinforcement of local security forces along the Sino-Nepalese border.⁸³ ⁸⁴ More detailed information about the hardships of Tibetan refugees in Nepal can be found in TCHRD's recently

published report *Languishing in Limbo: Tibetan Refugees in Nepal*.

Meanwhile, the CCP seeks to justify its multiple extradition treaties by invoking security concerns, leading operations such as Fox Hunt ("an international anti-corruption campaign in which [China] seeks to locate fugitives around the world and bring them to China to face genuine criminal charges") and Sky Net (which aims "to capture corrupt officials, crack down on fake passports, bust underground banks, recover assets involved in criminal cases and persuade fugitive suspects to return home").⁸⁵ This represents the international extension of the securitisation, at a domestic level, of issues related to ethnic and cultural minorities.

As the world's second-largest economy, China uses financial incentives to achieve political means - not only when interacting with developing countries like Nepal, but also to gain influence in wealthy Western countries. For example, Kyinzom Dhongdue, a former member of the Tibetan parliament in exile, clearly stated: "We all know how China has worked to build its influence and dependence through trade and economic ties with Australia."⁸⁶ The protection of economic interests could also explain the Swiss authorities' complicity in CCP-led TNR. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Switzerland is one of the only Western countries to have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the PRC. During the flag-raising incident of 2020, the cantonal government of Vaud also invoked the need to comply with the "One-China Policy", which is the official position of the Swiss government's Department of Foreign Affairs.⁸⁷

Economic interests may also be at stake in the case of Greece, who signed a series of investment deals with China in 2019 - involving a significant Chinese investment in Piraeus Harbour (i.e. Athens' main sea port). According to Hong Kong activist Brian Leung, "the mere fact that Greece might lose investment under the shadow of China's threat can compel it to do the dirty work for Beijing."⁸⁸

The PRC also seems to exploit foreign powers' wish to maintain diplomatic relations as a lever to influence the latter. In 2009, following a meeting between the Danish Prime Minister (Lars Løkke Rasmussen) and the Dalai Lama, China cancelled several state visits to Denmark. According to the Tibet Commission appointed by the Danish government in 2022, in retrospect, the latter's preventing of anti-Beijing demonstrations in 2012-2013 can be seen as a "China-friendly" measure aimed to appease bilateral relations with the PRC.⁸⁹

It is noteworthy India has historically been a strong ally to Tibetans and a rival to China. Nevertheless, on certain occasions, the Indian authorities make concessions to Beijing that contribute to TNR against Tibetans - this is especially the case during official state visits, when the Indian police seek to prevent pro-Tibet demonstrations. Journalists from The Wire also suggested that the Indian government may be calibrating its attitude towards Tibetan refugees depending on the evolution of the Sino-Indian border dispute.⁹⁰

In recent years, we have also seen a certain number of governments and other foreign authorities denounce CCP-led TNR on their soil:

- In March 2016, twelve states (Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the USA) issued a joint statement to the UNHRC expressing their concern about "the unexplained recent disappearances and apparent coerced returns of Chinese and foreign citizens from outside mainland China": "these extraterritorial actions are unacceptable, out of step with the expectations of the international community, and a challenge to the rules-based international order."⁹¹
- In March 2019, the Swiss Defence Minister (Viola Amherd) declared that "the surveillance of exiled communities in Switzerland violates Switzerland's sovereignty and democratic values", while a spokeswoman for the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service (Isabelle Graber) stated that "China's self-confident and demanding behaviour is noticeable in relation to the Tibetan exile community in Switzerland". A few months later, the Swiss Foreign Affairs Ministry invited a Tibetan delegation to discuss TNR matters.⁹²
- In January 2023, the European Court of Human Rights decided that states party to the European Convention on Human Rights should no longer extradite people to China in the absence of proof that the extradited person would not be tortured or subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. This decision was based on the "Liu v. Poland" judgment, in which the case of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was cited as a cause for concern over allegations of death in custody as a result of torture or ill-treatment.⁹³
- In April 2023, the Netherlands' Coordinator for National Counter Terrorism and Security (a body of the Dutch government) stated that the two illegal Chinese "service stations" in Rotterdam

and Amsterdam, who were threatening Tibetans (see Sub-category 2), had been closed.⁹⁴

- In July 2023, the Intelligence and Security Committee of the British Parliament published a report on the topic of Chinese espionage and interference in the UK, mentioning the CCP's aim to shape the public narrative to mute criticism of the CCP and its actions - particularly in relation to Tibet.⁹⁵

This is especially true of US authorities:

- In 2021, the US Ambassador to Nepal (Randy W. Berry) and visiting US government representatives met with Nepalese government officials to express concern regarding restrictions on the country's Tibetan community.⁹⁶
- In January 2022, FBI Director Christopher Wray mentioned TNR as a threat to minorities living in the US (including Tibetans), and to democracy itself.⁹⁷
- In January 2022, the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues (Uzra Zeya) acknowledged China's TNR of Tibetan exile communities, and the Biden-Harris administration's increasing efforts to combat it.⁹⁸
- In March 2022, the US Department of State imposed visa restrictions on PRC officials who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, TNR.⁹⁹ In March 2023, the US Department of State published its 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which mentions the PRC's transnational repression of Tibetans.¹⁰⁰ At a CECC hearing on China's global transnational repression campaign in September 2023, US Department of State Under Secretary Zeya remarked that "the PRC uses TNR to harass and threaten Uyghurs, Tibetans, members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, Hong Kongers, and PRC citizens and non-PRC citizens living abroad, who seek only to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms."¹⁰¹
- In March 2023, a bipartisan group of US senators introduced the Transnational Repression Policy Act, which establishes countering TNR as a domestic as well as foreign policy priority.¹⁰²

• TREND 2:

Infiltrating diaspora communities

- In July 2014, pro-CCP propagandists opened scores of fake accounts on Twitter to promote Beijing's line on Tibet. The sheer scope of the initiative suggests state backing.¹⁰³
- In accordance with a policy launched by the Chinese government in 2014, state-provided phones are issued to former Tibetan political prisoners, who are required to use them exclusively. The aim is to monitor their movements and conversations following their release - including potential contacts with exiled relatives.¹⁰⁴
- In October 2017, a Chinese woman (US passport-holder Zhu Wenqi) physically assaulted a Tibetan lawmaker and tore down photos from an exhibition in Dharamshala commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Lhasa demonstrations.¹⁰⁵
- In 2017, the Swedish government arrested a Tibetan refugee (Dorjee Gyantsan) turned spy for the Chinese Ministry of State Security. He had spent years tracking the movements of Tibetan immigrants in Sweden, Poland, and Denmark, for a Chinese embassy official in Warsaw. He was convicted of "illegal intelligence activity" in 2018 and deported back to China.¹⁰⁶
- In April 2019, the newly formed Tibetan Association of Canada, which promoted Beijing's rule in Tibet, was denounced as a front for the Chinese government. According to Pr. Tsering Shakya from the University of British Columbia, the establishment of this so-called association was a response to the local emergence of young influential Tibetan leaders advocating against China's rule in Tibet.¹⁰⁷
- In February 2020, following ten days of protests by pro-Tibet activists, a propaganda exhibit (sponsored by the local Chinese Consulate) about supposed social advances in Tibet was closed in New York.¹⁰⁸
- In August 2020, a Chinese man (Luo Sang) was arrested for bribing Buddhist monks in Delhi (via WeChat) to spy on the Dalai Lama. Since the 2010s, there have been several cases of Chinese nationals, as well as a man of Tibetan origin, spying on the Dalai Lama in Himachal Pradesh. CTA official Tsewang Gyalpo Arya interpreted this as Beijing attempting to "infiltrate the security apparatus of His Holiness the Dalai Lama".¹⁰⁹
- In September 2020, an NYPD officer of Tibetan origin (Baimadajie Angwang) was arrested for spying, on behalf of the Chinese government, on the Tibetan community in Queens. One of his handlers was identified as a Chinese consular employee working for the UFWD.¹¹⁰ The charges against him were eventually dropped in January 2023.¹¹¹
- In July 2021, a new campaign to identify Tibetans living in exile was launched in Dingri county (Shigatse), Lithang county (Kardze TAP), and Nagchu. Tibetan residents are ordered to hand over the names and personal details of their exiled relatives, threatening them with the loss of government subsidies if they refuse. Given the fact that these communities are already impoverished, they are more dependent on subsidies and thus more vulnerable to this type of blackmail. Furthermore, even though they eventually complied, their government subsidies were taken away.¹¹²
- In March 2022, the US Department of Justice accused five people (Qiming Lin, Shujun Wang, Fan "Frank" Liu, Matthew Ziburis, and Qiang "Jason" Sun) of attempting to suppress criticism of the Chinese government on US soil through various means, including spying on members of the US-based Chinese dissident community (including Tibetan activists).¹¹³ In May 2022, four MSS officials (Feng He, Jie Ji, Ming Li, and Keqing Lu), accomplices of the previously mentioned Shujun Wang, were charged with spying on political activists (including Tibetans) in an attempt to silence critics of the PRC on US soil.¹¹⁴
- In February 2022, Coda Story compiled testimonies from exiled Tibetan journalists and other writers experiencing TNR. One of them (who chose to remain anonymous) was tricked into meeting with an officer from one of the PRC's state security agencies, who implied his family in Tibet would be harmed if he did not answer questions about his sources. The reporter managed to escape but, a few weeks later, was kidnapped and had his phone searched. These events led the reporter to end his media career.¹¹⁵
- In June 2022, authorities in Drago county (Kardze TAP) were demanding that local Tibetans report the COVID status of relatives living outside the country, threatening them with

the loss of government subsidies if they refused.¹¹⁶

- Between June 2016 and July 2022, the Chinese police may have collected between roughly 919,282 and 1,206,962 DNA samples in Tibet, representing between 25.1 and 32.9% of the region's total population. Given that the PRC's Ministry of Public Security has an international mandate to organise exchanges and collaborate with international police and security apparatuses, this could contribute to TNR.¹¹⁷
- In September 2022, Safeguard Defenders revealed the existence of a network of overseas police stations: the Public Security Bureaus from two Chinese provinces have established 54 stations across 5 continents and 21 countries to intimidate overseas Chinese citizens. These tools support China's policy of so-called "voluntary" returns, whereby exiled Tibetans (among members of other persecuted communities) are coerced into returning to the PRC.¹¹⁸
- In October 2022, the police in the Tibetan settlement of Majnu Ka Tilla in New Delhi arrested a Chinese woman (Cai Ruo) for living in India under a false identity, pretending to be a Nepalese Buddhist nun named Dolma Lama.¹¹⁹
- In November 2022, three Tibet groups in the Netherlands sent a letter to the Dutch Prime Minister (Mark Rutte) about the intimidation they have been facing. According to the International Campaign for Tibet in Europe, in recent months, Tibetan residents in the Netherlands have been receiving phone calls from unknown individuals, some who identified themselves as representatives of the Chinese embassy, and some who concealed their affiliations.¹²⁰
- In December 2022, the Indian police arrested a Chinese woman (Song Xiaolan) for spying on the Dalai Lama's activities in Bodh Gaya. Various media sources have reported that the suspect had been staying in various parts of the country for the last two years as a covert agent.¹²¹
- In the past months, there have been several instances of CCP-affiliated individuals and organisations trying to censor speeches from the Sikyong. In March 2023, China denounced a virtual meeting between the Sikyong and the US Congress, labelling him the leader of a "separatist political group".¹²² In June 2023, local Chinese Embassy representatives attempted to cancel a speech given by the Sikyong at the Australian National Press Club in Canberra.¹²³

While some cases cannot be conclusively linked to the CCP, one can infer the latter's involvement by asking questions such as: Would an individual or organisation be able to achieve this without state backing? And who would benefit from this other than the Chinese government?

CCP-affiliated officials and social media propagandists typically dismiss pro-Tibet initiatives as foreign interference in China's internal affairs, and urge governments to shift their focus to the development of smooth diplomatic relations with the PRC. The aim of CCP propagandists abroad is to manipulate not only Tibetans themselves, but also to instrumentalise public opinion and even political leaders. For example, the so-called Tibetan Association of Canada (founded in 2019 and rapidly unmasked as a front for the Chinese government) had forged fake letters of congratulations from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister of Immigration Ahmed Hussen, and used them as a basis to attract support.¹²⁴

When NYPD officer Baimadajie Angwang was arrested, CTA official Karma Rinchen warned that the Chinese government would take advantage of critical moments in Tibetan politics - such as elections for exile leaders - to try to destabilise the diaspora by sending spies into the community.¹²⁵ The damage is greatest when the spies are Tibetans themselves; according to Lama Tseta, former head of the Shugden Association of South India, "The Chinese government is spending huge amounts of money to use Tibetans against other Tibetans to destroy our unity".¹²⁶ As observed by Jamphel Shonu of Tibet.net, knowing that China felt the need to plant a spy in a Tibetan community as small as that of Sweden (estimated at 140 people in 2018), we can imagine a much heavier involvement in larger groups.¹²⁷

What are the incentives for exiled Tibetans to spy on their fellow community members? Baimadajie Angwang claimed that if he did indeed provide information to an official at the Chinese consulate in New York (which was labelled a "major spy hub" by the then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo), he was simply "following the typical process for overseas Tibetans applying for a Chinese visa" (he did indeed apply for a 10-year visa to China, allegedly to visit his relatives).¹²⁸ Robert Barnett of Columbia University remarked, "That's what many people dealing with the Chinese embassy are in - the position of a supplicant (...) [Officials] will sometimes try to get information or some promise of support in return [for granting the desired visa]".

• TREND 3:

Taking control through digital tools

- In 2008, the Dalai Lama's personal computer and email were hacked by Chinese spies through phishing.¹²⁹
- After having been under constant attack from the same group of Chinese hackers since 2011, the CTA's website was infected with viruses in 2013.¹³⁰
- On the occasion of the 34th Kalachakra Initiation (i.e., a series of Buddhist teachings conferred by the Dalai Lama in Bodh Gaya) in January 2017, WeChat filtered and censored users' messages regarding the Dalai Lama and Tibet in general.¹³¹
- The closest circle of advisors around the Dalai Lama, and staff members of other Buddhist clerics, were targeted by an unknown India-based client of the Israeli spyware firm NSO Group from 2017 to 2019.¹³²
- In 2018, Zamlha Tempa Gyaltsen, Head of the Environment and Development Desk (EDD) of the Tibet Policy Institute, declared that the EDD's email account had been hacked several times.¹³³
- The Citizen Lab documented 10 cyberattack campaigns against the Tibetan community between 2009 and 2018. Most of them involved malware sent as email attachments (in 2009,¹³⁴ 2012,¹³⁵ 2013,¹³⁶ 2013,¹³⁷ 2014,¹³⁸ 2015,¹³⁹ 2016¹⁴⁰ and 2018¹⁴¹).
- In February 2021, cybersecurity researchers discovered a malicious Firefox extension (TA413) that had been deployed since March 2020 to facilitate access to and control of the digital data of exiled Tibetans. The operation involved an email impersonating the Tibetan Women's Association, sent via an account impersonating the Bureau of the Dalai Lama.¹⁴²

As detailed in Chapter 1, there are innumerable incidents of surveillance through WeChat, with negative consequences for exiled Tibetans and their relatives in Tibet (the latter being often weaponised in order to control the former). For example, in April 2021, two residents of Tibet (Samten Sangpo and Tsultrim) were arrested for communicating with exiled Tibetans through WeChat.¹⁴³ A comprehensive list of keywords related to Tibet are systematically censored from the app, as well as images identified as politically

sensitive.¹⁴⁴

- In early 2022, it was revealed that Tibetans in Dragyab County and Chamdo with contacts in exile had been ordered to install a spyware app on their phones.¹⁴⁵
- As of 2022, nearly two thirds of UK councils were using CCTV cameras manufactured by Hikvision, a Chinese state-owned company linked to human rights abuses in Tibet and Xinjiang. Hikvision has significant security flaws that could allow images recorded abroad to be transmitted to China without consent.¹⁴⁶

Years before Western intelligence started warning of China's cyberespionage targeting the private sector, the Tibetan and Uyghur diasporas were among the first digital networks to be targeted by state-sponsored Chinese hackers, as early as 2002.¹⁴⁷ These hackers exploit the same weaknesses to target Tibetans and Uyghurs,¹⁴⁸ taking advantage of the community's lack of awareness and/or funds when it comes to securing their online spaces.

- **“Malware”** is a general term designating any malicious software that victims are tricked into downloading on their electronic device (computer or phone).

- There are different types of malware depending on the end goal; for example, a **spyware** is a type of malware that can allow the attacker to control the victim's device, typically to track their actions and collect their personal data.

- **“Phishing”** designates any process through which the attacker seeks to extort personal information out of the victim; typically, spyware can be installed on the victim's device through a phishing operation.

Many of these CCP-mandated cyberattacks take advantage of the new avenues for espionage and repression opened up by the use of social media. The latter, which can also play a positive role in pro-Tibetan advocacy, thus appears as a double-edged sword. The most controversial social media tool in this regard is WeChat, which is ubiquitous throughout the PRC - including for everyday life services like banking and taxi booking. It is also accessible from abroad; in 2019, an estimated 70% of the Tibetan diaspora relied on WeChat to communicate with their relatives back in Tibet.¹⁴⁹ Knowing that the Chinese government subsidises WeChat and has banned other global social media apps in the region,¹⁵⁰ it comes as no surprise that the Chinese authorities (including the MPS' Internet Security Bureau) are able to access and censor personal information shared via the app (including

users' location), and use this information to monitor and coerce exiled Tibetans and their relatives.

In addition to WeChat, the Chinese authorities routinely monitor and censor other apps that could be useful to the pro-Tibet movement, such as Twitter/X and Instagram. There have even been cases of Chinese agents infiltrating Signal groups. In August 2022, footage of Free Tibet protesters wearing "Where is Peng Shuai" t-shirts at Wimbledon Stadium (London) was censored by TikTok on the grounds of "bullying and harassment".¹⁵¹ In November 2022, the creator of the popular Tibetan language video-sharing app GangYang announced he was shutting it down - officially for financial reasons, but more likely as an order from the Chinese government.¹⁵²

The constant government surveillance on social media platforms is no exception, but one of many illustrations of the PRC's official position on cybersecurity. Indeed, China's Cybersecurity Law, implemented in 2017, poses the principle of "cyber sovereignty", according to which the prerogatives of the state should extend to the national cyberspace. In the case of the PRC in particular, this implies that the same principles of governance (including surveillance and censorship) are applied in the physical and virtual realms - thereby intruding upon netizens' freedom of expression.¹⁵³ The so-called "50 Cent Army", i.e. a group of 500,000 to two million state-backed online propagandists, can be seen as the online equivalent to the CCP's Central Propaganda Department.¹⁵⁴ In February 2023, the Chinese government issued new cybersecurity measures for Tibet, with harsher punishments for anyone engaging in "separatist acts". The aim is to deepen the separation between Tibetans inside Tibet and those in exile, thereby isolating both parties.¹⁵⁵

• **TREND 4:**

Pervading foreign academic spheres

- In April 2013, the University of Sydney withdrew its support for hosting a human rights talk with the Dalai Lama, seemingly to "protect its financial ties with the Chinese government" - including funding for its Confucius Institute.¹⁵⁶
- In 2015, Xi Jinping designated overseas Chinese students as a "new focus" for the United Front Work Department.¹⁵⁷

In August 2017, Cambridge University Press announced it had censored more than 300 articles ("sensitive content") from the Chinese website of the academic journal *The China Quarterly* at the

request of media regulators in Beijing.¹⁵⁸

- In November 2017, Springer Nature (one of the world's largest academic publishers) confirmed it had blocked access to 1,000 journal articles to Chinese internet users because they contained banned keywords relating to political topics such as Tibet. The company explained itself: "China's regulatory requirements oblige us to operate our SpringerLink platform in compliance with their local distribution laws, [which] only apply to local access to content."¹⁵⁹
- In 2017, US-based Chinese students Sulaiman Gu and Wu Lebao, as well as some of their friends, were repeatedly harassed by the Chinese state security police asking them to spy on overseas democracy activists and dissidents, with a special interest in the activities of Tibetans. Wu Lebao was told that his compliance was a requirement if he ever wanted to return to China, while Sulaiman Gu's relatives were harassed by the police.¹⁶⁰
- In 2017, the University of California San Diego invited the Dalai Lama to deliver a speech. This sparked opposition among Chinese students, and the local Chinese Students and Scholars Association demanded that university officials ensure politics would not be addressed in said speech. Some commentators suspected that the Chinese embassy was involved.¹⁶¹
- In January 2018, Canada-based Chinese student Shawn Zhang posted a picture of the Tibetan flag, accompanied by the words "Free Tibet", to Twitter. Within hours, the public security police in his hometown was threatening his parents, demanding that he take down the post.¹⁶²
- In February 2019, a Canadian student of Tibetan origin (Chemi Lhamo) was cyberbullied after being elected President of the University of Toronto Scarborough Students' Union. Thousands of overseas Chinese students signed an online petition of protest, pointing out her ties with pro-Tibet organisations.¹⁶³ Lhamo even received death threats.¹⁶⁴
- Sonam Chokey, national director of Students for a Free Tibet Canada, testified about her experience of TNR in 2019: "Personally, I've experienced harassment from Chinese nationals at street protests and I have also received really unfriendly phone calls. I have voicemails from this one person who called me many times speaking very poorly about the Dalai Lama, talking about me, threatening me and my life."¹⁶⁵

- In 2019, the US Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars started to take action to protect fellow academics and activists from pro-CCP groups that threatened them.¹⁶⁶
- In 2019, the UK's Conservative Party Human Rights Commission called for a review of all agreements between British institutions and the Confucius Institutes, as tools of TNR embedded on university campuses around the world.¹⁶⁷ The UK Parliament also expressed its worry regarding the financial, political, and diplomatic pressure on British universities to comply with Beijing's political agenda; among its tools are the government-supported Chinese Students and Scholars Associations.¹⁶⁸
- In September 2019, a group of Chinese students protested a Gu-Chu-Sum association-led photo exhibition on Tibet at the University of Queensland (Australia), calling it "harmful to China".¹⁶⁹
- In its Word Report 2020, Human Rights Watch states that pro-Beijing students in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US have sought to shut down campus discussions about human rights abuses in Tibet.¹⁷⁰
- In 2020, a 20-year old student (Drew Pavlou) was suspended for two years from the University of Queensland (Australia) for his on-campus anti-China activism supporting Tibet, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang. It is noteworthy that the university offers four courses that were co-founded by the Chinese government, and is also home to a Confucius Institute.¹⁷¹
- In January 2022, a staff member of Duke University's Pratt School of Engineering issued a public apology for suggesting, in a previous email, that Tibet was a country separate from China; she identified this as "incorrect and insensitive statement to the Chinese community and the government of China."¹⁷²
- In April 2023, posters placed by pro-Tibetan activists around the campus of Columbia University (New York) were ripped off or vandalised with the words "Tibet is an indispensable part of China". In addition, attendees at a screening of a Tibet documentary noticed a man who appeared Chinese taking photographs through the window.¹⁷³
- Following the publication of the Leiden Asia Centre's report *Influence and Interference of the PRC Among the Chinese Population in the*

Netherlands (April 2023), the Tibetan community in the Netherlands sent a letter to the Dutch Foreign Ministry to raise concerns about its contents. Specifically, the Tibetan community criticises the report's lack of cultural sensitivity, as well as its erroneous numbers: the report claims that Tibetans and Uyghurs in the Netherlands amount to 1,252 individuals in total, while the Tibetan community states that 1,000 Tibetans and 3,000 to 4,000 Uyghurs are living in the Netherlands. These inaccuracies call into question the validity of the report as a whole.¹⁷⁴

- In August 2023, nationalist Chinese students daubed CCP propaganda slogans on a popular graffiti wall in London's Brick Lane, sparking a huge backlash of pro-democracy slogans that included calls for freedom for Tibet.¹⁷⁵

Within this sub-category, we can identify three main types of perpetrators of TNR:

1. Universities and other types of academic research centres

The most oft-cited motivation for universities to comply with CCP demands is their increasing dependence on Chinese funding, whether from fee-paying Chinese students or from Chinese government and corporate entities. As pointed out by Human Rights Watch, this may result from a decrease in public funding to higher education in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US over the past decade.¹⁷⁶ As in other fields, unsurprisingly, it appears that China is using its economic leverage to push its TNR agenda. Furthermore, in addition to the pressure at an institutional level, one cannot rule out the possibility of individual academic figures being mandated by the CCP to censor and spread disinformation through their work.

2. Academic publishing companies

Academic publishing companies invoke the necessity to comply with local regulations, including partial censorship, as a *sine qua non* condition to access the Chinese market. Beyond purely financial concerns, representatives of Cambridge University Press invoked a utilitarian argument: they are willing to sacrifice part of their content as long as the rest of their academic and educational materials remain available to researchers and educators in the Chinese market.¹⁷⁷

3. Chinese students abroad, either mandated by CCP-affiliated entities or seemingly acting of their own volition

Chinese students overseas are coerced by the CCP through similar threats to those made to exiled

Tibetans - i.e. harassing, harming or otherwise intimidating their relatives, and preventing them from returning to China. It seems to be a given that the Chinese authorities have access to enough personal information to be able to blackmail overseas citizens. Sometimes, rewards are also promised: the aforementioned US-based student Sulaiman Gu was told by a state security police officer that if he complied, he “could end up better off than the majority of people just from doing that little bit of work”.¹⁷⁸

Canada-based Chinese activist Sheng Xue: “Overseas students bear the brunt; they do not

have the nationality of other countries to protect them and they may have to go back to China, so they become cannon fodder for the Chinese Communist Party overseas.”¹⁷⁹

Various CCP-affiliated entities mandate overseas Chinese students to spy on local communities: the Chinese state security police, Confucius Institutes, Chinese Students and Scholars Associations, as well as overseas Chinese embassies and consulates. These entities work in collaboration with each other under Beijing’s guidance.

- The Chinese state security police are agents of the Ministry of State Security (MSS), which is the PRC’s intelligence service. In 2020, two students who went to study in Australia, including one Uyghur, were harassed and threatened by MSS officers demanding that they spy on overseas communities.¹⁸⁰
- The Confucius Institutes form an educational network founded by the CCP in 2004 with the official purpose of promoting Chinese language and culture. They are under the responsibility of the PRC’s Ministry of Education. In exchange for millions of dollars, every foreign university that agrees to host a Confucius Institute must sign a contract with the Chinese government, stipulating that the Institute activities must “respect cultural custom” as well as China’s “laws and regulations” - thereby potentially compromising fundamental rights and freedoms on foreign soil.¹⁸¹ As of 2017, Confucius Institutes were implemented in more than 1,630 schools and universities in 146 countries.¹⁸² Since then, they have been denounced as a front for the CCP to spy and censor overseas academic circles, and many of them have closed. However, foreign universities in need of funding have maintained their relationship with Chinese institutions, including through the implementation of new programmes with the

same goals and means as the former Confucius Institutes.¹⁸³

- The Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) represent another network of overseas Chinese students and scholars, with the stated aim of ensuring their welfare. In reality, these associations play a propagandist and censor role akin to that of the Confucius Institutes, and can be seen as fronts for overseas youth party cells.^{184 185}
- The organisational efficiency and proportions of pro-CCP student actions also suggest backing by local Chinese embassies and consulates. For example, Chemi Lhamo believes that the attack against her was coordinated by the Chinese embassy in Canada, noting that “students out of nowhere couldn’t organise protests quickly with thousands of Chinese nationals.”¹⁸⁶ Unsurprisingly, the Chinese consulate in Toronto denied any involvement and claimed that the online comments were spontaneously generated by “objective facts and patriotic enthusiasm.”¹⁸⁷ Chen Yonglin, a former diplomat who defected from the Chinese consulate in Sydney in 2005, confirmed that even at the time, the local Chinese consulate was “very concerned about the attitudes of overseas students.”¹⁸⁸

OTHER TRENDS

- Actors of the private sector abroad are also susceptible to Chinese influence. MNCs contribute to CCP-led TNR in order to preserve their economic relationship with China. For example, in January 2018, a social media manager for Marriott International US was fired after “liking” a Tweet praising the company for calling Tibet a country, rather than part of China. The President and CEO of the company issued an apology promising “to focus on making sure our Chinese guests feel respected”.¹⁸⁹ The following month, in February 2018, Mercedes-Benz publicly apologised to Chinese consumers for an Instagram post featuring a quote from the Dalai Lama.¹⁹⁰
- There are also instances of the entertainment and sports industry prioritising their economic ties with China. For example, in June 2023, former NBA player Enes Kanter Freedom told Congress that he was blacklisted from the league for wearing shoes with messages highlighting Beijing’s persecution of Tibetans and Uyghurs, prompting his team’s games to be banned in China (at a time when the NBA’s Chinese subsidiary was worth about US\$5

billion).¹⁹¹ Another example is that of a football tournament organised in London during the Summer of 2018: a potential corporate sponsor asked the organiser (the Confederation of Independent Football Associations) to remove the Tibetan team from the tournament, fearing it would be a “deal-breaker” with future Chinese business partners. The organiser refused, leading to a loss of \$100,000 in sponsorship money.¹⁹²

Lama look fake, to achieve their own ends, to undermine Tibetan Buddhism and to fragment Tibetan society.”¹⁹⁸

- Tibetan activists are often surveilled and intimidated (e.g., photographed, followed, threatened) by Chinese officials at or ahead of UN events,¹⁹³ as illustrated by the testimony of
- Golog Jigme in Chapter 1. At the 52nd UNHRC Session in March 2023, the Tibetan Speaker (Thinlay Chukki) was repeatedly interrupted by the Chinese delegation while speaking on behalf of the Society for Threatened Peoples.¹⁹⁴ China’s growing influence within the United Nations system (as member of the Security Council and, perhaps more importantly, second-biggest funder) is a general cause for concern, as illustrated recently by its interference in the OHCHR’s Xinjiang investigation.¹⁹⁵
- There are documented cases of physical violence committed by Chinese individuals against Tibetans abroad. In July 2022, a Tibetan man (Tsultrim Nomjour Tsang) was killed in France by three Chinese men, two of whom were his work managers.¹⁹⁶ During a video game competition (“Counter Strike: GO World Championship”) held in Paris in May 2023, two Tibetan youths were subjected to harassment and manhandling by a group of eight Chinese youths for displaying the Tibetan national flag; one of the Chinese youths snatched the Tibetan flag, and images later surfaced on Twitter of the same flag being burned.¹⁹⁷
- The CCP also seeks to exploit internal divisions within Tibetan Buddhism, such as the controversial sect of Dorje Shugden, which represents the fundamentalist wing of the Gelugpa school. The Dorje Shugden sect has been surrounded by tension for years, as it sought to suppress all the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. For this reason, in addition to doctrinal concerns, the Dalai Lama himself (also a member of the Gelugpa school) openly discourages this practice. In 2015, a Reuters investigation revealed that the UFWD had been backing overseas Dorje Shugden activities, using its spiritual leaders “as a tool to make the Dalai



VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- 1 Establish an official definition of transnational repression to be used by all governmental and non-governmental agencies.¹⁹⁹
- 2 Raise awareness about transnational repression among police, security agencies, as well as governmental and non-governmental personnel working with refugees and asylum seekers.
- 3 Impose targeted sanctions and travel bans on the individuals responsible for perpetrating acts of transnational repression, including introducing Magnitsky-style legislation on the use of targeted sanctions to address gross human rights abuses.
- 4 Provide concrete protections to specific populations, including Tibetan diaspora communities, that experience persecution and are targeted for transnational repression.
- 5 Hold regular and periodic consultations with representatives of diaspora communities as part of a systematic policy to monitor and address all forms and acts of transnational repression.
- 6 Support and help implement the recommendations of the Australian Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on countering issues faced by diaspora communities, including providing support to community organisations to assist with capacity building.²⁰⁰
- 7 Create a safe space for academic freedom for students and scholars from China to learn about and criticise the Chinese government without fear of being monitored or reported.
- 8 Make concerted efforts at the multilateral level to establish international norms for addressing transnational repression by creating a Special Rapporteur on Transnational Repression at the UN.
- 9 Actively support and engage with civil society organisations that monitor and report on transnational repression by providing funding and other resources as and when necessary.
- 10 Exert pressure on all democratic governments to protect human rights on their soil, through their own domestic agencies. Indeed, when NGOs publish reports, it can affect law enforcement organisations who consider transnational repression as a domestic issue. For example, the FBI (which is the US national police and thus the agency in charge of protecting constitutional rights at the federal level) has released multiple documents (including an official definition on their website) denouncing Chinese transnational repression as violating US laws and rights.²⁰¹

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