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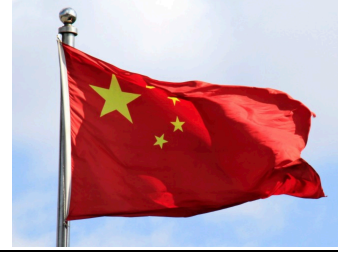
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Causes, Cards, and Caution:

A consideration of various foreign policy perspectives on India's
approach to Tibet within Sino-Indian relations

Independent Study Project for SIT Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Program, Fall 2023

Advisor: Dr. Sriparna Pathak

By Olivia Kenney

About this paper

In this paper, I hope to demonstrate various perspectives that exist among journalists, scholars, and former and current associates of both government and non-governmental organizations, representing Tibetan-in-exile and Indian national perspectives. Rather than a deep dive into one subject, this project portrays four separate yet intertwined topics of debate from both historical and current aspects of India's approach to Tibet and Tibetans on Indian soil within India's relations with China. I discovered these to be topics of debate through my fieldwork. I focus on the following four questions:

1. What options were available to India in relation to Tibet in the early-to-mid 1950s?
2. Did India's extension of hospitality to the Dalai Lama and to Tibetan refugees in 1959 motivate China's invasion in the Ladakh/Aksai Chin region in 1962?
3. Does India employ Tibet as a strategic 'card' in its negotiations with China?
4. To what degree does India refrain from signaling friendliness to Tibetans to reduce tensions in its relations with China?

I consider varying perspectives on these issues, and I portray a prevailing theme that emerged through my interviews that India will not sacrifice core interests of Tibetans, including their ability to protest on Indian soil. This is especially true given the recent downward direction of India's relations with China. Several of my interviewees portrayed recent developments, especially the Galwan Clash of 2020, as making crystal clear to Indian policy makers that under its current form of governance, China can never be a true friend to India.

Methodology and Acknowledgements

Throughout the semester, I consulted numerous published resources related to topics including Sino-Indian relations, the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetans in India, and contemporary politics of India, China, and other regions. I also attended multiple public talks in Dharamsala, India. This includes one talk at the Central Tibetan Administration by Tibetologist Claude Arpi.¹ Other talks were facilitated by SIT, such as one talk at the home of several Tibetan activists and authors, and a talk at the Central Tibetan Administration from staff at the organization.²

During my month of fieldwork, I divided my time between two cities in India. I spent two weeks in Dharamsala, which houses the Central Tibetan Administration and the main offices of multiple other Tibetan organizations. I then spent eleven days in New Delhi, which is the capital of India, and it is near to multiple Indian universities. In these locations, my goal was to interview people knowledgeable about my topic from both Tibetan and Indian foreign policy perspectives. To establish contacts, I sent emails, made phone calls, and when that sometimes failed, I walked into offices and introduced myself.

I was lucky to encounter numerous kind, helpful, and knowledgeable people who made this project possible. I am deeply grateful to the many people who helped me by granting me insight, advice, and connections. I was offered hospitality and warm beverages in homes, offices, and coffee shops. I offer special thanks to Professor Kondapalli for a lovely home-cooked dinner, house tour, and even a ride home. I am also especially grateful to Professor Sriparna Pathak, who

¹ Arpi, "The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects."

² Tsundue, Buchung, and Namgyal Khortsa, "Conversation between 3 Tibetan Authors and Activists and Students of SIT Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Program, Fall 2023"; Tenzin and Tsewang, "Tibet Policy Institute Presentation to Students of SIT Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Program Fall 2023."

was kind enough to talk to me for several hours, connect me to multiple other people, and to be my advisor for this project.

I am also thankful to the people I consulted about this project prior to the project who wish to remain anonymous. Their guiding insight was crucial to the development of this project, as was the advice of members of the Tibet Policy Institute. Finally, I am beyond grateful to the staff at SIT for facilitating this project and semester, and for offering me truly incredible support and guidance throughout the whole experience.

Limitations

To truly do this topic justice, I would need to re-consult multiple of my interviewees about their stances on questions which emerged following my conversations with them, especially those in Dharamsala. Sadly, time and travel logistics did not permit this.

Additionally, for this paper, I consulted only scholars, public officials, journalists, and other community leaders for Tibetans in India and in the field of Indian foreign policy. A public survey of ordinary people may paint a very different picture of the relationships between India, Tibet, Tibetans in exile, the Central Tibetan Administration, and China. The perspectives of Tibetan activists, especially those who have been arrested in India for their protest activities, is also a necessary but missing perspective for this work. This would be a valuable future pursuit. Additionally, I included perspectives of only people living in India, representing Tibetan-in-exile and Indian national perspectives. Including viewpoints of people from other nations including Nepal, Bhutan, China, and even the United States would also be valuable.

Also, the number of factors which influence foreign policy are incredibly vast. There are many elements of this paper to which could be expanded upon by incorporating additional

geopolitical context. A key element of this is India's, China's, and Tibetans' in exile respective relationships with the United States, which are each dynamic and inextricably intertwined. The respective foreign policy cultures of India and China would also be useful contextualizing considerations, as noted to me by several of my interviewees.

With these limitations in mind, I hope the following snapshot of variance in perspectives within these topics may spark future scholarly pursuits, which can lend these topics the depth of analysis they deserve. What follows is an entry point into these topics of debate.

Introducing my interviewees

Below is a list of the people with whom I spoke that agreed to be named in my project. I include non-exhaustive lists of each of their experience and recognitions which I perceive to be relevant to my project. I am beyond grateful to each of these individuals for their time, hospitality, and insight. It must be noted once again that, since the topic of this project changed since the outset of my fieldwork, I did not get the chance to reconsult my interviewees about the differences in perspective which I noticed to emerge between themselves and others with whom I spoke. As such, this paper should be read not as if these individuals are having a conversation, but rather as the connections I am making from the interpretations I am drawing from what they shared with me. Readers should reserve judgements on the individuals below, keeping in mind the limitations of my methods during this project.

Dharamsala:

- **Mr. Tenzin Lekshay La** – spokesperson for the Central Tibetan Administration, Department of Information and international relations, previously Coordinator of the India-Tibet Coordination Office in Delhi³
- **Mr. Sonam Tsering La** - General secretary of Tibetan Youth Congress⁴
- **Ms. Tenzin Paldon La** – Editor-in-Chief at Voice of Tibet⁵
- Anonymous former Tibetan parliamentarian (not quoted but informative interview)
- I also spoke with staff at the Tibet Policy Institute (CTA), who provided me guidance both before and during my fieldwork period, and to a staff member at the Ministry of Home (CTA)

New Delhi:

- **Dr. Sriparna Pathak** – Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Admissions at Jindal Global University, School of International Affairs (also the advisor for this project, for which I am very grateful)⁶
- **Ambassador Shivshankar Menon** – Current positions include Chairman of Advisory Board at Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and visiting Professor at Ashoka University, New Delhi, and previous positions include: National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, Jan 2010-May 2014; Foreign Secretary of India, October 2006-July 2009; and he served as the Indian Ambassador or High Commissioner to China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Israel⁷

³ “Director.”

⁴ “TYC’S GENERAL SECRETARY, SONAM TSERING LA WAS INVITED AS THE CHIEF GUEST DURING THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF A CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY THE RTYC SARAH – <https://www.rtyc.org/>”

⁵ “Contact Us - VOT Voice of Tibet - Latest News on Tibet.”

⁶ “Dr. Sriparna Pathak.”

⁷ “Shivshankar Menon - CSEP.”

- **Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli** – specialist in China’s Foreign & Security Policies, previous chairman of Centre for East Asian Studies, current dean of School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi⁸
- **Mr. Jayadeva Ranade** – security and intelligence expert, China Analyst: Member of the National Security Advisory Board, President of Centre for China Analysis and Strategy, previously an Additional Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, Member of the Core Group on China of the Indian Council of World Affairs⁹
- Anonymous Tibetan source

Introduction and Basic Historical Context

Tibet has played important roles in India’s history, including ancient religious and trade linkages.¹⁰ In more recent history, Tibet has been central to India’s relations with China, as China’s 1950 occupation of Tibet gave China and India a shared border.¹¹ China has since consistently claimed portions of Indian territory across this boundary, leading to several violent clashes and the deaths of numerous soldiers throughout the years.¹²

India’s decisions have also been impactful for the status of Tibet as a nation, and for Tibetans. In the years following China’s 1950 invasion of Tibet, India made several notable moves, including signing an agreement with China in 1954 in which it affirmed Tibet to be part of China, and in 1959, taking in the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans seeking refuge from China’s violent suppression of a Tibetan uprising.¹³

⁸ “Srikanth Kondapalli | Welcome to Jawaharlal Nehru University.”

⁹ “Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.”

¹⁰ “Ancient Links and Political Treaties: Tibet’s History as a Sovereign Nation.”

¹¹ Arpi, “The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects.”

¹² Arpi.

¹³ Arpi.

In the years since 1959, India has offered a home and assistance to a community of Tibetans on its soil which numbers nearly 75,000 as of 2022.¹⁴ While many Tibetans in India have historically and still do face various challenges including legal barriers to official land ownership, work, and identification, it must be noted that India has provided consistent support to Tibetans, including working with Tibetan representatives to mitigate these challenges.¹⁵ The spokesperson for the CTA, Mr. Tenzin Lekshay La, emphasized the CTA's gratitude to India as their host.¹⁶ He also expressed that he sees a goal of the CTA to be contributing towards the well-being of India, including sometimes defending them against criticism from the international community.¹⁷ Indian academics and former and current government associates with whom I spoke consistently expressed warm sentiment towards Tibetans and investment in their well-being.

India also must navigate its relationship with China. Major considerations India must handle include China's aggressive attempts at expansion, both militarily at their shared border and in India's geographic neighborhood, in which China increasingly seeks to gain influence over smaller countries including Bhutan and Nepal through projects including Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁸ Additionally, India maintains trade with China, with the China representing India's number one partner in trade by some metrics.¹⁹ Sino-Indian relations have shifted in the years since 1950, with the mid-50s marked by an era of attempts at friendship.²⁰ China's activities in Tibet and increased aggression at India's borders put an end to this period of

¹⁴ "Declining Number of Tibetan Refugees in India - The Peninsula Foundation."

¹⁵ Kaufman, "Shelter from the Storm: An Analysis of U.S. Refugee Law as Applied to Tibetans Formerly Residing in India"; Reporter, "Government of India Formalises Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy 2014."

¹⁶ Lekshay, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹⁷ Lekshay.

¹⁸ "India to Stay Absent from China's Belt and Road Forum for the Third Consecutive Time."

¹⁹ "India Trade | WITS Data."

²⁰ Radchenko, "The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai."

amicability in 1959, and China's 1962 invasion into the region known as Ladakh or Aksai Chin dragged their relationship further into the mud.²¹ In the decades since, relations have varied, and I will not portray this in detail.

Most relevant to my project is that several of the scholars I interviewed emphasized how in the last 5-10 years, China's increased border aggression spurred another downturn. The culmination of this is often cited at the 2020 Galwan Clash. In their 2022 paper titled "Reasons and Reactions to the Galwan Clash: and Indian Perspective," Pathak and Objha Borah Hazarika described this event and its implications for Sino-Indian relations.²² Below I include their timeline of events of the Galwan Valley Crisis:

²¹ Radchenko.

²² Pathak and Hazarika, "Reasons and Reactions to the Galwan Clash."

Table 1: Unfolding of the Galwan Valley Crisis

Month/ Year	Details
May 5, 2020	Violent confrontation between Indian and Chinese patrols near Pangong Tso.
May 9, 2020	Skirmish in Naku La area of Sikkim.
June 15, 2020	Galwan Valley Clash, in which India reported deaths of 20 soldiers, while China reported deaths of only four while TASS reported 45 Chinese deaths.
August 29-30, 2020	India takes control of multiple heights along the Kailash range. Indian Army and the PLA face off for the first time on the southern bank of Pangong Tso.
October 19, 2020	Chinese soldier identified as Corporal Wang Ya Long apprehended after he crossed into Indian territory in the Demchok sector of Eastern Ladakh.
October 21, 2020	Corporal Wang Ya Long released from Indian custody after completion of due protocols and formalities
January 9, 2021	A Chinese soldier captured in Ladakh by the Indian Army. He was returned to China on January 11.
January 20, 2021	Minor border clashes take place in Naku La, Sikkim.
February 11, 2021	Initial and partial disengagement of Indian and Chinese troops near Pangong Tso take place.
February 22, 2021	Indian and Chinese troops complete the pull-back of forces from Pangong Lake.
July 13, 2021	PLA troops enter the Demchok sector and protest against the Dalai Lama's birthday. A village community center was marking the occasion.
July 26, 2021	Chinese "civilians" enter Indian area at Chardin Nala in Demchok sector and set up tents and refuse to leave.
August 6, 2021	Analysts point out that PLA structures are still visible through satellite imagery at Gogra, despite so-called disengagement at the site.
January 4, 2022	China begins construction of bridge at Pangong Tso.

Figure 1 "Table 1: Unfolding of the Galwan Valley Crisis," Pathak and Hazarika, 2022.²³

Pathak and Hazarika articulate the implications of the Galwan Crisis, asserting that “China unilaterally unleashed military aggression against India, necessitating India to recalibrate its relationship and rethink diplomacy.”²⁴ They go on to explain that, as of the time of writing in 2022, “India and China have been locked in a border standoff since May 2020. Even after 14 rounds of border talks between the two militaries, a resolution is nowhere in sight,” going on to describe it as a “watershed moment” for India and China’s relationship.²⁵ In our conversation in New Delhi, Pathak emphasized that this is still the case, saying that the Galwan Crisis placed the “final nail

²³ Pathak and Hazarika.

²⁴ Pathak and Hazarika.

²⁵ Pathak and Hazarika.

in the coffin” in Sino-Indian relations.²⁶ Menon describes the time since as a “political impasse” between India and China, as normal political relations cannot be restored until China restores the pre-2020 status quo.²⁷

India therefore navigates an interesting dynamic. The nation hosts numerous exiled Tibetans, along with their religious leader and government-in-exile. It also shares a lengthy border with China, which simultaneously threatens India’s sovereignty and is economically important to India through trade. Furthermore, China is notoriously sensitive to anything it perceives to be interference in its internal affairs, including advocacy for Tibetan causes. This is especially notable in countries including Nepal.²⁸ International Campaign for Tibet emphasizes the risks Tibetans in Nepal face for protest activity in their 2018 article “Photo with Tibetan flag led to Tibetan activist’s 10-day detention in Nepal.”²⁹ In this piece, they assert that “There are increasing dangers for Tibetans in Nepal as the Nepalese authorities deepen their relationship with China,” a sentiment echoed by several of my interviewees.³⁰ India, however, does not bow to such demands from China in the way that Nepal does, and Tibetans are allowed to demonstrate on Indian soil to a much larger degree than in Nepal, an idea which became clear to me by talking to Tibetans during my time in both Nepal and India this semester. India’s position as a much larger nation than Nepal is critical to this difference. Several of my interviewees also noted that India’s democratic values contribute to why they protect Tibetans in this manner.

²⁶ Pathak, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

²⁷ Menon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

²⁸ Reporter, “Tibetans Repressed in Nepal, Rights Group Finds.”

²⁹ Tibet, “Photo with Tibetan Flag Led to Tibetan Activist’s 10-Day Detention in Nepal.”

³⁰ Tibet.

Part 1: Historical Debates

1. Debates on India's options in relation to Tibet in the early-to-mid 1950s, and the bigger picture

Variations exist in how each of my interviewees, sources I consulted, and presenters whose talks I attended interpret several events throughout India, China, and Tibet's history in the early-to-mid 1950s. In this section, I portray several of these perspectives which emerged through my interviews. However, I also address events and dynamics that extend beyond this period, as several of my interviewees urged me to consider these events in a greater context, lest they paint a picture of India's approach towards Tibet which may be misleading.

Context:

In his Dharamsala talk September 2023, Claude Arpi points out that before the PLA invaded Tibet in 1951, China and India shared no border.³¹ When India gained independence from the British in 1947, they were left with a legacy of undefined northern boundaries.³² These borders had been peaceful for centuries, with Tibet serving as a buffer between India and China.³³ However, following their 1950 invasion of Tibet, China took advantage of ill-defined borders and began to claim Indian territory, including parts of Ladakh.³⁴

Despite this onset of border incursions by China in the early 1950s, Sino-Indian relations in the mid-1950s are marked by an attempt at friendly relations between then-Indian Prime

³¹ Arpi, "The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects."

³² Arpi.

³³ Arpi.

³⁴ Arpi.

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then-Chinese leader Mao Zedong.³⁵ Sergey Radchenko discusses this period, often referred to as “Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai,” which translates to “India and China are brothers.”³⁶ At a talk in Dharamsala, Tibetan author Buchung D Sonam portrayed communist-leaning Nehru as buying into a narrative propagated by Mao that together, India and China could bring about a 20th century resurgence of Asian global power.³⁷ During this time, as Nehru prioritized amicability toward China, India signed the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement.³⁸ In this agreement, which Arpi emphasizes as a turning point for the region, India agreed that Tibet is not a sovereign nation, but rather a part of China.³⁹ This agreement has implications which still shape how India interacts with China, Tibet, and Tibetans in exile.

Varying perspectives

Different perspectives exist regarding the options available to India in the early 1950s. While some sources I consulted and people I talked to believe India could have taken a harder stance in negotiations with China, others emphasize that China’s military power and additional challenges India faced at the time made this option impossible for India. Some go as far as to suggest that India may have been able to prevent China’s invasion of Tibet, but others assert that this option was not feasible. Rather than seek definitive answers to these questions, I will demonstrate varying perspectives that exist among experts in this topic today. I will discuss not only India’s choices in the 1950s, but

³⁵ Radchenko, “The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai.”

³⁶ Radchenko.

³⁷ Sonam, “Conversation between 3 Tibetan Authors and Activists and Students of SIT Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Program, Fall 2023.”

³⁸ Arpi, “The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects.”

³⁹ Arpi.

also related decisions and approaches by India in the years since, as several of my interviewees prompted me to consider this history as part of a larger picture for a better understanding of these dynamics.

Scholars Tenzin Lhadon and Claude Arpi imply that India could and should have done more to stand up against China's claims to Tibet in the early-to-mid 1950s, but that they did not because of the Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai naivete. In her piece, "Recentring Tibet in India's Approach to China," Dr. Tenzin Lhadon at the Tibet Policy Institute portrays her perspective that Nehru's move in 1954 to affirm Tibet as part of China amounts to appeasement of Mao, including the work of Norbu with the statement "Nehru's efforts for an "amicable settlement" of the dispute to bring normalcy to India-China relations materialized into the 1954 Panchsheel agreement, one that effectively *"sacrificed Tibet's historical status at the altar of Sino-Indian friendship (Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai), should be seen in this perspective"* (Norbu 1997, 1080)."⁴⁰ In his Dharamsala talk, Arpi goes a step farther by he suggesting that India may have been able to prevent China's invasion of Tibet, but that India did not do this in order to maintain their friendship with China.⁴¹ Arpi portrays India's move not to challenge China's claims to Tibet as potentially negative not only to Tibet's but also to India's national interests, suggesting that India may have saved itself from China's border incursions into India in the last 70 years by preventing the invasion.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lhadon, "Recentring Tibet in India's Approach to China."

⁴¹ Arpi, "The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects."

⁴² Arpi.

Ranade portrays India's early 1950s diplomatic decisions as influenced by Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai era sentiments that India may be able to form a genuine and lasting friendship with China.⁴³ Radchenko echoes this sentiment, describing Nehru and Mao as "caught up in the toxic discourse of domestic nationalism and blinded by ideological dogmas" in their optimism for the countries' joint success.⁴⁴ Similarly, Ranade frames India's decisions in the early 1950s as part of their "misreading of China and its intentions right from the very beginning."⁴⁵ He went on to say that "We could have taken a tougher position in our negotiations," though he does not believe India should have gone to war.⁴⁶ However, despite Ranade's thoughts on this period in history, he emphasizes that in recent years, India's considerations of China have not resulted in any "meaningful setbacks for the Tibetans."⁴⁷ Ranade therefore portrays that this sentiment in Indian-policymaking is of limited significance towards understanding India's decisions in recent years.⁴⁸

Pathak expressed that while she believes Nehru's acceptance of Tibet as part of China in the Panchsheel Agreement to be influenced by what she frames as Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai era naivete, she is uncertain whether India could have intervened in China's 1950 invasion.⁴⁹ She portrayed that India's moves going forward of offering hospitality and protection to Tibetans, including freedom to demonstrate, is most representative of India's approach towards Tibet and Tibetans.⁵⁰

⁴³ Ranade, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁴⁴ Radchenko, "The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai."

⁴⁵ Ranade, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁴⁶ Ranade.

⁴⁷ Ranade.

⁴⁸ Ranade.

⁴⁹ Pathak, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁵⁰ Pathak.

Menon counters the perspective that India could have taken a harder stance against China on behalf of Tibet in the early-to-mid 1950s.⁵¹ On the fact that India did not attempt to militarily prevent China's invasion of Tibet, Menon commented "I'm not sure what more India could have done [...] India clearly had no military options."⁵² He went on to explain that Prime Minister Nehru consulted the senior-most Indian general on their options. This general pointed out that, given that India was fighting a war in Kashmir, still handling the recent partition in this region, and accommodating 10 million refugees, India simply did not have the capacity for a military intervention in Tibet.⁵³ Menon portrays that, due to India's lack of military options to help Tibet, the nation's options have been limited to declarations and statements.⁵⁴ In relation to these, he points out that India has been historically consistent on its position that China agreed to grant Tibet meaningful autonomy.⁵⁵ Given Tibet's signing of the 17-Point Agreement and later adoption of the Middle Way policy, Menon frames this as India's only option when it comes to the country's position on the status of Tibet in relation to China.⁵⁶ However, Menon also emphasizes that, despite India's inability to create change for Tibetans in Tibet, the country has provided incredible support to Tibetans as host to a significant portion of the exile community, the Dalai Lama, and the Central Tibetan Administration.⁵⁷ On this, Menon points out the exceptional nature of India's hospitality, including "the willingness of our leaders to meet with His Holiness, the way the refugees were made at home, given land, allowed to run their own schools, teach in their own language."⁵⁸ He explains that humanitarian and religious

⁵¹ Menon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁵² Menon.

⁵³ Menon.

⁵⁴ Menon.

⁵⁵ Menon.

⁵⁶ Menon.

⁵⁷ Menon.

⁵⁸ Menon.

motivations have contributed to this course of action by India.⁵⁹ It is important to note that Menon, like each of the people I spoke with and speakers whose talks I attended, expressed personal investment in the well-being of Tibetans and the protection and preservation of their culture and religion.⁶⁰ Differences in historical perspective, therefore, cannot be attributed to apathy for the cause of Tibet.⁶¹

Menon's perspective is significant because it illuminates the idea that, regardless of debates surrounding what options were available to India in the 1950s regarding Tibet, India has consistently treated Tibetans, their culture, and their religion as worth protecting and preserving. Despite differing perspectives on multiple elements of India's historical strategy towards Tibet and China, a theme emerged among my interviews that India's position towards Tibetans is at its core, supportive, and will be for the foreseeable future. This includes protecting Tibetans' freedom of expression.

2. Was China's aggression in 1962 retaliation for India's hospitality in 1959?

Context

1959 is considered by many to mark an end to this era of friendliness between India and China.⁶² China brutally suppressed a Tibetan uprising, driving His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans into exile in India.⁶³ Radchenko describes this as "the trigger" which brought Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai to a close.⁶⁴ India accepted the Dalai Lama and escaped Tibetans

⁵⁹ Menon.

⁶⁰ Menon.

⁶¹ Menon.

⁶² Radchenko, "The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai."

⁶³ Radchenko.

⁶⁴ Radchenko.

with hospitality. John Avedon articulates how, during his escape from a Lhasa under siege in 1959, “the Dalai Lama received a telegram from Prime Minister Nehru welcoming him and extending all “facilities” for his residence in India, an offer which was followed through on.”⁶⁵

Arpi emphasizes that China became more aggressive with their border claims in response to the Dalai Lama’s relocation to India in 1959.⁶⁶ Radchenko describes this escalation, stating that “The Chinese responded by increasing their military presence in the border area, which in August and October 1959 led to a series of skirmishes that resulted in the deaths of several Indian border guards.”⁶⁷ Radchenko also asserts that China’s 1959 escalation of aggression at its borders was justified by the PRC by the idea that Tibetans’ activities in India amounted to instigation of rebellion.⁶⁸ Menon commented that, in 1959, “for the first time the Chinese revealed the extent of their claims on the boundary.”⁶⁹

1962 is broadly considered to be another turning point in Sino-Indian relations. Britannica provides a useful description of what is referred to as the Sino-Indian war of 1962:

“After a number of border skirmishes between 1959 and 1962, which began initially as a by-product of the uprising in Tibet, the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of China forcefully attacked across the disputed boundaries on October 20, 1962. Indian forces were soundly defeated, 7,000 men having been killed or captured, and the lowlands of Assam lay open to the invaders.

⁶⁵ Avedon, John. In Exile from the Land of Snows (p. 116).

⁶⁶ Arpi, “The India-Tibet Boundary: Historical Background, The Sino-Indian Dispute, Current Prospects.”

⁶⁷ Radchenko, “The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai.”

⁶⁸ Radchenko.

⁶⁹ Menon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

The Chinese leadership chose the height of the Cuban missile crisis as their moment of attack, apparently expecting a more drawn-out crisis in Cuba that would have distracted superpowers from intervening in India. But the swift resolution in Cuba in favour of the United States permitted Washington to respond to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's request for help. With a U.S. aircraft carrier en route, China announced a unilateral ceasefire on November 20 and soon afterward withdrew from most of the invaded area. It retained control of about 14,700 square miles (38,000 square km) of territory in Aksai Chin, and the area remained a point of contention between the two countries."⁷⁰

Varying Perspectives

Kondapalli asserts that China's retaliation to India's decisions in 1959 to open their arms to the Dalai Lama includes their invasion in 1962.⁷¹ Kondapalli articulates that the perception that China's actions in 1962 were retaliation for India's reception of the Dalai Lama influences India to exercise caution in how they handle Tibet and Tibetans in their territory today.⁷²

A contrasting perspective is offered by Ranade, who disagrees with the assertion that India's 1962 attack was fueled by India's 1959 reception of the Dalai Lama.⁷³ "The Chinese had made up their mind much earlier," he said. "Read Mao's selected works and all, he was very clear that he wants to be the number one guy in Asia. So, that set us on a collision course [...] not

⁷⁰ "Sino-Indian War | Causes, Summary, & Casualties | Britannica."

⁷¹ Kondapalli, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁷² Kondapalli.

⁷³ Ranade, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

because India wanted to be number one, but India said ‘there is enough space for everyone,’ and that conflicted with Mao’s view.”⁷⁴

Ranade went on to say that “there are people who feel that had he [the Dalai Lama] not been here, the relationship [between India and China] may have been alright. To which my question is, the fundamental question still remains: would you have been subservient to the Chinese? If you have not been, there would have been a problem.”⁷⁵ He points out that the issue of China laying claim to parts of India’s territory existed regardless of where the Dalai Lama was.⁷⁶

In this paper, I will not be evaluating the legitimacy of either of these claims. Rather, by demonstrating the differences in perspectives that exist surrounding this issue among people who are both highly respected and experienced in fields relating to Sino-Indian relations, I hope to demonstrate the potential for variance in interpretations of not only historical but also current topics relating to Tibet in Sino-Indian relations. Additionally, as I discuss later in my paper, differences in interpretations of historical issues surrounding Tibet, India, and China, including the question of whether China’s attacks in 1962 were motivated by India’s hospitable reception of the Dalai Lama, may influence perspectives on current debates in the foreign policy of this region.

⁷⁴ Ranade.

⁷⁵ Ranade.

⁷⁶ Ranade.

Part 2: Debates on Current Approaches to Tibet in India's Foreign Policy

1. The 'Tibet Card' Concept

In his 2020 article for *The Diplomat* titled “The Tangled History of the ‘Tibet Card,’” Ben Hales defines the concept as “promoting an independent and free Tibetan state, undermining Beijing’s geostrategic position, and perhaps finding a definitive solution to the Sino-Indian border dispute in the process through supporting a (likely) friendly buffer.”⁷⁷ Hales traces the origins of this strategy perspective for India to the 1950s, and he makes a number of assertions regarding how Nehru, Mao, and other actors including the CIA contributed to the foundations of this concept.⁷⁸ A historical evaluation of the origins of this concept is outside of the scope of this project. In her 2021 article “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again,” for *The Diplomat*, the publication’s South Asia editor Sudha Ramachandran provides a simple interpretation that India’s move to grant refuge to Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, in 1959, and its continued role as host to about 100,000 refugees today, “has bestowed India with the ‘Tibet card,’ leverage against China that India could use to score points in its own conflict with Beijing.”⁷⁹

In this paper, I will discuss current debates around this concept. Various perspectives exist surrounding to what degree, if at all, India invokes Tibet as a strategic ‘card’ in its diplomacy with China, as well as both the ethics and strategic legitimacy of this concept. I purposefully did not label the above paragraph as “context,” as the assertion that India has

⁷⁷ “The Tangled History of the ‘Tibet Card.’”

⁷⁸ “The Tangled History of the ‘Tibet Card.’”

⁷⁹ “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

invoked or does invoke Tibet as a strategic ‘card’ is itself a topic of debate. The real or potential impacts of this approach on Tibetans and whether it is a legitimate strategy to further India’s national interests are also contested topics.

Several experts on Sino-Indian relations consider India to invoke Tibet as a strategic ‘card’ in its relations with China. On July 6, 2021, Prime Minister Modi tweeted “Spoke on the phone to His Holiness the Dalai Lama to convey greetings on his 86th birthday. We wish him a long and healthy life.”⁸⁰ In “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again,” for *The Diplomat*, Ramachandran interprets Modi’s tweet as an invocation of the ‘Tibet Card.’⁸¹ She asserts that this is the first time Modi commented publicly on birthday messages to His Holiness since 2015.⁸² While China had not responded to this action at the time of writing, Ramachandran speculates that “the wishes from India are likely to have ruffled feathers in the Chinese government.”⁸³ She goes on to describe several times in recent years that she interprets Modi and other Indian officials to have invoked the ‘Tibet Card.’⁸⁴ These include several events in 2014, such as when Modi invited former Sikyong Lobsang Sangay to his first inauguration, when the Dalai Lama was invited to meet then-president Pranab Mukherjee, and when the Dalai Lama was invited to visit Tawang in Arunchel Pradesh, where China claims a large portion of land.⁸⁵ Kondapalli affirmed the idea that Tibet is sometimes invoked by India as a strategic jab against China, asserting that at times of tension between India and China, India sometimes brings up Tibet more than at other times.⁸⁶ In her 2023 article “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to

⁸⁰ Narendra Modi [@narendramodi], “Spoke on Phone to His Holiness the @DalaiLama to Convey Greetings on His 86th Birthday. We Wish Him a Long and Healthy Life.”

⁸¹ “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

⁸² “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

⁸³ “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

⁸⁴ “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

⁸⁵ “Prime Minister Modi Plays the ‘Tibet Card’ Again.”

⁸⁶ Kondapalli, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

China,” Dr. Tenzin Lhadon at the Tibet Policy Institute further also asserts that India employs this approach.⁸⁷

Contrary to these perspectives, multiple foreign policy experts I spoke with expressed concern and disagreement at the assertion that India invokes Tibet as a strategic ‘card’ in its negotiations with China. In our conversation, Menon expressed his disagreement with this idea. “They’re not a card,” he said, describing the phrase as “transactional” and as a “demeaning” way to refer to Tibetans.⁸⁸ He continued, saying that “This is not about a card. This is about the future of the Tibetan people. Future of Tibetan Buddhism. Future of cultures and civilizations.”⁸⁹ Pathak echoed this sentiment, saying that “A lot of people say that India has the ‘Tibet card.’ It’s not a card for India. It is not something to leverage. These are human beings. These are people.”⁹⁰

In addition to ethical concerns surrounding notion of a ‘Tibet card,’ Menon asserts that the concept of a ‘Tibet Card’ is not a legitimate strategic approach that could bring about lasting results for India’s challenges with China. At a talk in his home in Dharamsala, Tibetan independence activist Tenzin Tsundue also portrayed the concept as strategically inviable.⁹¹ He justified his stance based on China’s disproportionate military power as opposed to India.⁹² A strategic analysis of this concept is beyond the scope of this paper, though it may be an interesting topic for further research.

⁸⁷ Lhadon, “Recentring Tibet in India’s Approach to China.”

⁸⁸ Menon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁸⁹ Menon.

⁹⁰ Pathak, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

⁹¹ Tsundue, “Conversation between 3 Tibetan Authors and Activists and Students of SIT Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples Program, Fall 2023.”

⁹² Tsundue.

Interestingly, in her 2023 piece “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China,” Dr. Tenzin Lhadon portrays India as sometimes invoking Tibet as a strategic card, and she suggests that India should employ Tibet as a talking point in India’s negotiations with China more than they already do.⁹³ With this assertion, in stark contrast with the comments of Menon and Pathak, she implies that India invoking the cause of Tibet for its own strategic purposes can be positive for Tibetans. It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the actual or potential impacts on Tibetans of India invoking the topic of Tibet in its negotiations with China as a strategic ‘card,’ but this topic may warrant further consideration.

2. Tibet: A topic of caution in India’s interactions with China?

Notes on this section

The limited number of perspectives on this topic that I drew together for this paper demonstrate a range of ways to consider the topic of how cautious India has been and is towards the issue of Tibet in its relationship with China. It must be noted, however, that many of my interviewees’ perspectives are overlapping and not mutually exclusive. Further research should gain more perspectives on this topic and provide a more extensive analysis of their implications, including in context with current and historical geopolitical developments. A lack of cohesive analysis is especially notable in this section. The topic of this section is a very broadly defined form of ‘caution’ that varies between the points I present. However, through my fieldwork I began to sense conceptual connections between the different viewpoints I portray, and though I

⁹³ Lhadon, “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China.”

do not untangle the precise relationship between these in this work, I hope the parallel presentations of these ideas may be of some use to readers.

Section Introduction

Disagreements are evident among scholars and journalists surrounding the degree to which the Indian government, historically and in recent years, refrains from signaling too much friendliness to Tibetans to smooth tensions with China.

Several Similar Perspectives

Chellaney, Lhadon, and Malhotra each frame several decisions made by Modi or his administration during his time as Prime Minister (starting 2014) as a pattern of behavior prioritizing India's relationship with China over friendliness towards Tibetans in India.⁹⁴ In their respective pieces, they imply that India is overly-cautious in this respect.

1. Chellaney asserts that, in 2018, Modi chose to draw back “from official contact with the Dalai Lama and Tibet’s India-based government-in-exile,” while at the same time proposing an “annual “informal” bilateral summit” with Xi Jinping.⁹⁵ Chellaney portrays Modi’s decisions regarding contact with the Dalai Lama as connected to efforts to improve relations with China.⁹⁶
2. Lhadon adopts a similar perspective towards different events in 2018 and 2019.⁹⁷ In her piece, “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China,” she writes the following:

⁹⁴ Chellaney, “India’s Appeasement Policy Toward China Unravels | by Brahma Chellaney”; Tsering, “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China”; “Modi Keeps Dalai Lama at Arm’s Length before China Visit.”

⁹⁵ Chellaney, “India’s Appeasement Policy Toward China Unravels | by Brahma Chellaney.”

⁹⁶ Chellaney.

⁹⁷ Lhadon, “Recentering Tibet in India’s Approach to China.”

“In 2018, to express Tibetan exile’s gratefulness to India, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) organised a ‘Thank You India’ event which initially had been scheduled in New Delhi but had to be moved to Dharamsala in early March. The Indian government was reported to have cautioned its senior officials to stay away from attending the event amidst tensions with China (Hindustan Times 2018). An Indian news source notes that there is a shift in India’s policy on Tibet under the increasing tensions between India and China, indicating the Indian government managing the Dalai Lama in public forums (drishtias.com 2021).⁹⁸”

Lhadon also writes that, despite being invited to Modi’s first swearing in as Prime Minister in 2014, the head of the executive branch of the CTA at the time, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, was not invited to Modi’s second swearing in in 2019.⁹⁹ Lhadon makes clear that she sees both of these decisions as part of pattern of Modi to smooth over relations with China, sidelining Tibet in the process.¹⁰⁰

3. Writing for India Today in her 2015 piece “Modi keeps Dalai Lama at arm’s length before China visit,” Jyoti Malholtra asserts that “A meeting between BJP president Amit Shah and the Dalai Lama was cancelled at the last minute because the PM did not want the Chinese to be upset with the senior BJP leadership meeting the Tibetan spiritual leader.” Amit Shah is India’s minister of home affairs.¹⁰¹ A line in the concluding paragraph of her

⁹⁸ Lhadon, “Recentring Tibet in India’s Approach to China.”

⁹⁹ Lhadon; “Narendra Modi Sworn in for Second Term as India’s Prime Minister | CNN.”

¹⁰⁰ Lhadon, “Recentring Tibet in India’s Approach to China.”

¹⁰¹ “Amit Shah | Home |.”

piece illustrates her interpretations of Modi's signaling: "it seems as if the Modi government hasn't fully come to terms with the Dalai Lama's presence in India."¹⁰²

It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the 'true motivations' of Modi or his administration with these actions. I include these accounts to demonstrate that a perspective exists among some scholars and journalists that Modi attempts to smooth over relations with China by sidelining the issue of Tibet. Interpretations of Modi and his government's motivations for gestures of public signaling are among the evidence cited to justify this viewpoint, as portrayed above. Below are several perspectives of people I interviewed relating to the topic of to what degree India exercises caution towards signaling friendliness to Tibetans with its relationship with China in mind. These perspectives paint different pictures of the Indian government and of the dynamic at play than do those of Chellaney, Lhadon, and Malholtra, and they also differ from each other.

1. Kondapalli:

Kondapalli expressed that the Indian government exercises some level of caution in terms of signaling over-friendliness to Tibetans as to prevent heightening tensions with China.¹⁰³ He sees this as directly connected to his viewpoint that India's offering of hospitality to the Dalai Lama in 1959 was responded to in 1962 by China's attacks in Ladakh, as discussed previously.¹⁰⁴ Kondapalli sees this as historical precedence for the idea that if India signals too much public amicability towards Tibetans, China may

¹⁰² "Modi Keeps Dalai Lama at Arm's Length before China Visit."

¹⁰³ Kondapalli, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹⁰⁴ Kondapalli.

retaliate violently.¹⁰⁵ Connecting the concepts of caution to that of the Tibet ‘card,’ Professor Kondapalli explained that, while Tibet is sometimes framed as a strategic ‘card’ with which India can gain leverage against China, it can also be understood as a liability.¹⁰⁶

However, like other experts I spoke with, Kondapalli emphasizes that actions in the name of this type of caution are of limited impacts to Tibetans.¹⁰⁷ He acknowledges that there are some cases where Tibetans have been accused of espionage, and there are some times when certain protest activities have been discouraged or stopped around the visits of Chinese officials.¹⁰⁸ However, he made clear that overall, India values Tibetans’ right to protest, and has never and will not bow to Chinese pressures to suppress Tibetans in the way that, for example, Nepal does.¹⁰⁹

2. **Menon:**

Menon affirms the assertion that India has refused to bow to Chinese pressure to suppress the protest activities of Tibetans in India.¹¹⁰ He also pointed out the inconsistency in China raising the Tibet issue with India when they claim it as an internal problem.¹¹¹

3. **Ranade:**

¹⁰⁵ Kondapalli.

¹⁰⁶ Kondapalli.

¹⁰⁷ Kondapalli.

¹⁰⁸ Kondapalli.

¹⁰⁹ Kondapalli.

¹¹⁰ Menon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹¹¹ Menon.

As previously addressed, Ranade emphasized that he does not agree that China's aggression in 1962 can be attributed to the India's offer of hospitality to the Dalai Lama in 1959.¹¹² However, he said that he does agree to some extent that India exercises caution.¹¹³ One reason he offered for India's caution throughout history this relates to his interpretation of India's options surrounding Tibet in the early 1950s.¹¹⁴ As previously discussed, Ranade believes that India misread China "from the beginning," and "could have taken a tougher position on Tibet" in negotiations.¹¹⁵ Therefore, Ranade implies that India has in the past been cautious to express over-friendliness towards Tibet based on what Ranade frames as the incorrect belief that India may be able to forge a genuine friendship with China. However, he expressed this to be of limited relevance today.

Ranade also points out that "we are cautious because we have a 4,052 kilometer border with the Chinese" which is un-demarcated.¹¹⁶ India realizes, Ranade continues, that at least since the early 1990s, there are economic and military disparities between China and India in China's favor.¹¹⁷ "They have surged ahead, and we certainly don't want to provoke a fight, so we've been careful, we've been sensitive," he said.¹¹⁸ However, Ranade emphasizes that this caution "hasn't resulted in any [...] meaningful setbacks for the Tibetans."¹¹⁹ In reference to the 'Thank You India' Event being moved from New Delhi to Dharamsala, Ranade expressed personal surprise and dissent for the decision, and he attributed it to variations in sensitivity among individuals in decision-

¹¹² Ranade, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹¹³ Ranade.

¹¹⁴ Ranade.

¹¹⁵ Ranade.

¹¹⁶ Ranade.

¹¹⁷ Ranade.

¹¹⁸ Ranade.

¹¹⁹ Ranade.

making positions.¹²⁰ However, he went on to emphasize that when Chinese officials do visit India, Tibetans are allowed to protest.¹²¹ They are not allowed to get too close to the embassy, however, which is consistent with how many other nations handle such situations, to ensure the safety of the visiting leader.¹²²

4. Why has Modi not met the Dalai Lama as Prime Minister?

Tenzin Paldon La, Editor-in-Chief of Voice of Tibet in Dharamsala, expressed some degree of uncertainty as to Modi's administrations sentiments towards both Tibetans and China.¹²³ I interpret her sentiments to resonate with concerns which I have outlined earlier in this paper that the Indian government may be overly cautious towards showing friendliness to Tibetans due to their relationship with China, though we did not discuss this issue explicitly in our conversation. The specific example she mentioned behind her viewpoint is the fact that Modi has not met the Dalai Lama as Prime Minister.¹²⁴ She said that there were several occasions when Tibetans were hopeful he would do so, but none of these panned out.¹²⁵

However, Pathak does not see Modi's decision as an intentional withdrawal from Tibetans and friendly signal to China. Pathak believes Modi's choice may be simply due to his busy schedule and his priorities forming connections with Western countries, which has necessitated large amounts of travel.¹²⁶ She also expressed that it could potentially be

¹²⁰ Ranade.

¹²¹ Ranade.

¹²² Ranade.

¹²³ Paldon, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹²⁴ Paldon.

¹²⁵ Paldon.

¹²⁶ Pathak, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

a decision made with intents not to signal that India is would employ Tibet as a strategic ‘card.’¹²⁷

This draws attention to the fact that, regardless of Modi’s intentions behind his decision not to meet the Dalai Lama as Prime Minister, and his public happy birthday tweet, these decisions will be read by onlookers in the context of the dynamics I have attempted to portray throughout this paper. This supports a perspective expressed by several of my interviewees that it may be most fruitful to focus on India’s more impactful actions towards Tibetans on their soil, rather than issues of public signaling.

5. Lekshay (Spokesperson of the CTA):

Lekshay shared that in the past, Lekshay and his associates considered India to be “over-cautious on Tibet issues when they talk about Tibet to China.”¹²⁸ However, he points out that “now India is also rising – India is also a prominent geopolitical player on the global stage,” which has allowed them to realize that issues of Tibet relate to their own national interests.¹²⁹ He frames this new attitude as based not only in sympathy but pragmatism, saying “when you are facing a problem within yourself, because of China’s occupation of Tibet, then you have to act upon it.”¹³⁰ With India’s global rise, Lekshay believes that now more than ever, Indian common people, parliamentarians, and civil servants are talking about Tibet, “Because Tibet is not just about Tibetan people, but Tibet is also about India – India’s security, India’s safety, and India’s interests.”¹³¹ Lekshay concludes that India’s consciousness on the Tibet issue has built up over the years,” and

¹²⁷ Pathak.

¹²⁸ Lekshay, Conversation relating to changes in the Central Tibetan Administration and Sino-Indian relations.

¹²⁹ Lekshay.

¹³⁰ Lekshay.

¹³¹ Lekshay.

“it has gone from over-cautious, to cautious.”¹³² It is important to note that, while acknowledging their caution, Lekshay emphasizes that India has first and foremost been supportive to Tibetans for both humanitarian and religious reasons.¹³³ “All the time we say that there is no better host than India,” he says.¹³⁴

Section Comments

It must be noted that, as brought up by several of my interviewees including Kondapalli, India’s relationship with Tibetans has not been challenge-free. Issues of legal status, tensions with local communities, and accusations of multiple Tibetans for espionage are among the problems faced throughout the by Tibetans during their time in India.¹³⁵ Additionally, despite the theme I portrayed as emerging from my interviews that India has preserved and will preserve Tibetans’ right to express themselves on Indian soil, including through peaceful protest, there are cases where protests have been shut down and protestors arrested, especially surrounding visits of high-level Chinese officials, including activist Tenzin Tsundue on many occasions.¹³⁶ The perspectives offered in this paper are not meant to invalidate the impact of these decisions on individual Tibetans and on the Tibetan community in India. Rather, I hope to illuminate that foreign policy experts with whom I spoke suggest India will not be selling out the core interests of Tibetans to China anytime soon. Many of my interviewees emphasize that India values Tibetans for humanitarian and religious reasons, and that Tibetans are considered to be important

¹³² Lekshay.

¹³³ Lekshay.

¹³⁴ Lekshay.

¹³⁵ Kaufman, “Shelter from the Storm: An Analysis of U.S. Refugee Law as Applied to Tibetans Formerly Residing in India.”

¹³⁶ “Tamil Nadu Cops Arrest Nine Tibetan Activists Ahead of Modi-Xi Jinping Summit | Chennai News - The Indian Express”; “China, India, Nepal.”

parts of India's communities. Pathak made this clear, saying about Tibetans in India that, "they are a part of us, we are a part of them." However, it must be noted that many voices are left out of this assessment. A necessary addition to this work is the perspectives of Tibetans who have been impacted by arrests and other challenges posed by the Indian government.

Conclusion

Project Purpose and Potential Uses

Throughout my journey of developing this project, my goal has been to gain a greater personal understanding of the complexities and nuances of India's foreign policy approach to Tibet within India's relations with China. Along the path, I frequently became confused. Some points of confusion were alleviated by learning about contexts, histories, or dynamics of which I had not been aware. Others, however, seemed only to become more confusing as I consulted more sources, as I encountered multiple conflicting viewpoints. These places of divergence in perspective eventually became the focus of my paper. By presenting these side by side, I hope to contribute to the work of generating clearer understandings of this fascinating, complex, and dynamic area of foreign policy.

Additionally, the themes which emerged from my conversations are significant. Many people with whom I spoke who represent Tibetan and Indian national perspectives portrayed the Indian government as, at its core, supportive of Tibetans in India. This is especially affirmed in the context of India's and China's current state of relations, which according to many of my interviewees, entered a downward spiral following the Galwan Crisis of 2020. Despite differing

interpretations of specific historical and current topics of Tibet within Sino-Indian relations, a picture that was painted to me through my conversations was one of an India that, while it must balance an aggressive giant to its north, will not sacrifice the core interests of its Tibetan residents in doing so.

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