

HOW TO EXPLAIN THE ISSUE OF EXILED TIBETANS IN TEACHING THE HISTORY OF SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

In the teaching of the history of Sino-Indian relations, the issue of exiled Tibetans is an unavoidable question. However, how to explain to the students the influence of the issue of exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian relations has long been a difficult problem for many teachers. The reason is that as a political issue, China and India have great disputes on it. They all stick to their own positions and views and it has been difficult for them to form a consensus in the past sixty years. In the current Internet era, the information sources of college students are very extensive. It is hard to convince them to explain the influence of the issue of exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian relations simply following the textbook's standpoint. Therefore, to enable students to fully understand it, we must first systematically review the formation reason and development course of the issue of exiled Tibetans, then objectively state the influence that has been caused by the issue of exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian relations and finally give an reasonable explanation on why the issue of exiled Tibetans must be solved. In a word, to successfully explain the influence of the issue of exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian relations, we must make students realize that the issue of exiled Tibetans is the stumbling block impeding the normalization of Sino-Indian relations. Failure to find an effective resolution to this issue is likely to trigger new confrontations and conflicts which would bring great negative impact on world peace and development.

Keywords: Sino-Indian Relations; Exiled Tibetans; security dilemma; history teaching

1 INTRODUCTION

In the classroom teaching of the history of Sino-Indian relations, many college students believe that border dispute is the main reason for the discord and long-term enmity between China and India. As a matter of fact, the border dispute is, instead of the crux of the matter, merely a superficial phenomenon for the underlying shortage of Sino-Indian strategic mutual trust. Both history and reality eloquently demonstrate that the culprit for the long-term enmity between China and India is none other than the harboring of exiled Tibetans seeking Tibetan Secession by the Indian government, which sticks obstinately to the national security policy of regarding China as its imaginary enemy and taking Tibet as a "buffer state". The issue of exiled Tibetans not only led to an almost complete loss of strategic mutual trust generated in the honeymoon stage in Sino-Indian relations between 1954 and 1958, but also made it difficult for the successive governments of these two countries to get out of the vicious circle of mutual suspicion and vigilance. At

present, with both China and India at a critical stage in their socio-economic development, the Tibetan separatist forces are also undergoing substantial changes. Failure to find an effective resolution to this issue is likely to exacerbate their mutual suspicion and thus trigger new confrontations and conflicts. With these two BRICS countries, each of which has a larger population more than one billion and plays a leading role in global economic development, peace brings benefits while fight courts disaster. If they were trapped in an enduring strife of “security dilemma”, not only would their respective socio-economic development be arrested, but global peace and development would also be negatively impacted. Therefore, it is urgent that both China and India should attach great importance to, reach a consensus on, and come up with a workable solution to, the issue of exiled Tibetans so that the stumbling block impeding the normalization of Sino-Indian relations can be removed once and for all. However, in order to enable students to correctly understand the influence of the issue of exiled Tibetans on Sino-Indian relations and agree with the above views, we must first make them understand its formation reason and development course.

2 SYSTEMATICALLY REVIEW HOW THE ISSUE OF EXILED TIBETANS CAME INTO BEING

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

However, after Britain was forced to evacuate from South Asia in 1947, India inherited the colonial legacy of its metropolitan state and continued to adhere to the security strategy of treating China as its potential rival and Tibet as a buffer state, and attempted to unilaterally take over Britain's privileges and maintain its illegal border demarcation in Tibet. Upholding the “Indian centralism” left over by Britain, Nehru, the founding Prime Minister of India, and his government dreamt of developing India not only as an economic and political center both of Southeast Asia and of Central Asia but also as an important participant in the affairs of the Pacific region. Therefore, the Indian government, shortly after its independence from Britain, flatly refused the demand from the Kuomintang regime and the Local Government of Tibet to resume the sovereignty over the land south of the McMahon Line. In order to stress its continuity with Britain in the Tibet-related policy, the Nehru government directly retained Richardson, the former British-Indian consul to Lhasa, turning him into an Indian consul. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the Chinese civil war between 1945 and 1949, India instigated the Local Government of Tibet to stage an eviction of the Han people from Tibet and to seek Tibetan Secession. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, in spite of its overall friendliness towards China based on much deliberation, India was still reluctant to waive the British colonial heritage in Tibet-related privileges and its vested interests on the issue of border, and even went further than Britain. As early as in the Tibetan liberation by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), India did everything possible to obstruct the Chinese government's resumption of sovereignty over Tibet. Indian authorities, in its diplomatic notes dated October 21, 28 and November 1, 1950, denied China's sovereignty over Tibet by the wordings such as “China-Tibetan relations” and “Chinese suzerainty”, referred to the PLA's military action as “Chinese invasion on Tibet”, and threatened not to support China's restoration to its legitimate status in the United Nations (UN) and “not to persuade the Tibetan delegation to go to Beijing”. Afterwards, India wantonly encroached on China's inherent territory while Tibet was not totally secured by the PLA. India's “appetite” surpassed the British-Indian government's territorial claim on Tibet in that it once put under its occupation Langjiu, an area which had never been reached by the British before. In addition, the Nehru government acquiesced in the military assistance that the United States provided to the Tibetan reactionary forces by mobilizing Indian facilities, thus becoming indirectly supportive of the Tibetan Secession activities. In 1956, after the Kangba rebellion, India once again interfered in China's internal affairs by stealthily harboring the exiled insurgents. After the Tibetan Rebellion in 1959, India began to offer public support and large-scale harboring to insurgents, thus perpetuating and internationalizing the issue of exiled Tibetans.

Under the long-term incitation and support of Britain and India, the Local Government of Tibet becomes increasingly estranged from the Central Government gradually. After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, although the Chinese government made various endeavors to maintain national unity and national solidarity, such as granting the 10th Panchen Lama and the 14th Dalai Lama an exceedingly high political status, proactively carrying out the modernization in the Tibetan area, correcting the deviations in the specific work in time and promising not to implement the reform within six years from 1956, it still could not contain the separatist activities of the Tibetan Secession forces. In March 1959, the reactionary Tibetan upper classes launched a full-scale armed rebellion, attempting secession. When the rebellion failed, a large number of rebels and many ignorant monks and ordinary folks followed in Dalai Lama's footsteps and fled to India and other countries, becoming the so-called exiled Tibetans.

3 COMPREHENSIVELY EXPOUND HOW THIS ISSUE IMPACTED THE SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

In the process of learning the history of Sino-Indian relations, many students are accustomed to viewing the issue of exiled Tibetans as an isolated event. In fact, India's overt sympathy for the Tibetan insurgents and its sheltering of large numbers of exiled Tibetans had a profound and long-term impact on China-India relations. The honeymoon period lasting more than four years in the wake of the signing of the *Tibet Agreement* ended abruptly and the two countries' various contradictions, which were covered up under the slogan of "the Chinese people and the Indian people are brothers", became gradually apparent, even to the point of open hostilities. Failure to bring the issue of exiled Tibetans to an effective and timely resolution not only destroyed the strategic mutual trust between these two countries, which were thus trapped into frequent discords, but also burdened them with the onerous task of maintaining domestic stability.

3.1 Interrupting the Development of Sino-Indian Friendship, the Issue of Exiled Tibetans Led Their Relations to Take a Sharp Downward Turn

In the early 1950s, India gave China a lot of help through its influence in international affairs. From 1950 to 1958, Indian leaders appealed publicly at least thirty times for the resumption of China's membership of the UN. On the issue of the Korean War, India, adhering to a relatively impartial and neutral position, withstood the pressure of Western countries and objectively protected Chinese legitimate rights and interests. On the Taiwan issue, India not only refused to attend the San Francisco Peace Conference with Japan in September 1951, which effectually intercepted the US's attempt to create "two Chinas", but also repeatedly reiterated its adherence to the "one China" policy and declared support for China's recovery of Taiwan islands when the situation in the Taiwan Straits was tense.

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

On the whole, characterized with more cooperation than contradiction, Sino-Indian relations took on considerable momentum from 1949 to 1959. Especially mention-worthy is that Sino-Indian relations enjoyed a relatively long honeymoon period after the signing of the *Tibet Agreement* in 1954 and the exchanged visits of the two prime ministers. However, Sino-Indian relations had turned sharply for the worse due to India's overt sympathy for the insurgents and its continuous sheltering of a large number of exiled Tibetans after the Tibetan rebellion. Since March 1959, China and India have continuously blamed each other for the issue of exiled Tibetans, leading to a sudden chill in their relations. Thus, the honeymoon period lasting more than four years ended completely and the two countries' various contradictions, which were formerly covered up under the slogan of "the Chinese people and the Indian people are brothers", became gradually apparent. In September 1960, India connived at the Dalai Lama's establishing the so-called Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala, aggravating Sino-Indian relations.

3.2 The issue of exiled Tibetans Undermined Their Strategic Mutual Trust and Intensified Their Border Disputes

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, India had to temporarily forego the security strategy of treating Tibet as

a buffer country, and to reconsider its relationship with China. At that time, India, like China, was mired in a precarious situation both domestically and internationally. Although India was founded earlier than the PRC, the Nehru government was confronted with enormous challenges, having a hard time clearing up the mess left by the British-Indian government. Domestically, not only was India caught in social upheaval, economic stagnation and meager livelihood, but it also experienced pressure from the alignment of the US and Pakistan and that of Britain and Pakistan through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Baghdad Pact. Furthermore, Portugal's occupation of Goa made India unable to fully realize its national unity.

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

Shortly after the Tibetan rebellion, armed conflicts broke out in Langjiu and Kongka Pass, which are located on the eastern and the western sector of Sino-Indian border. These two bloodsheds further aggravated their trust crisis. The two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union, however, both favored India in the Sino-Indian dispute which was rare in the past, making the judgment of Chinese and Indian leaders more contrary and the gap between the two sides be difficult to bridge. India, counting on the two superpowers' backing and assistance, became more aggressive on the border issues. In 1961, India began to implement a "progressive policy" that eventually led to the outbreak of a large-scale border war between the two sides. Since then, the relations between the two countries have entered a long "freezing period".

3.3 The issue of Exiled Tibetans Sowed Seeds of Confrontation, Resulting in Long-Term Discord between the Two Countries

After the Tibetan rebellion in 1959, the Nehru government blatantly sheltered the insurgents and overtly accused the Chinese government, causing profound influence for the Sino-Indian relations. From March 17 to April 27, 1959, Nehru discussed Tibetan situation seven times on public occasions successively, expressing his sympathy for Tibetan insurgents and his opposition to the military interference by the Chinese government⁵. In the meantime, the India's Ministry of External Affairs violating international practice, distributed through its official channels "Dalai Lama Statement", advocating the Tibetan secession and criticizing the Chinese government. At the same time, some propaganda in India reported the Chinese government's counterinsurgency campaign in Tibet as "the implementation of gangsterism and imperialism". Large amounts of negative information so quickly intensified the civil society's anti-China sentiment in India that it set off two large-scale anti-China waves from April to September in the same year.

The Chinese government has responded intensely to the words and deeds of the Indian government. March 21, 1959, the Chinese government warned India: "Tibet's counterinsurgency campaign is entirely China's internal affairs and any external interference will not be allowed; Tibet is part of China and any attempt to split Tibet from China is doomed to failure". Since then, the Chinese government repeatedly protested against India's interference in China's internal affairs through diplomatic channels. *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily* and other major media carried quite a few articles and editorials such as *India's Expansionists are not Allowed to Interfere in our Internal Affairs*, *No Violation of China's Sovereignty will be Allowed*, *Warning Against India's Expansionists: Don't Engage in Schemes and Intrigues* to express China's position and sentiment. Nevertheless, China's protests failed to stop India from continuing to host exiled Tibetans. The antagonism against each other gradually evolved into a substantive military confrontation. After India's defeat, exiled Tibetans became its trump card in balancing China. In November 1962, India, in cooperation with CIA of the U.S., recruited young exiled Tibetans and set up a special 10,000 strong border force at a military base close to the Sino-India border. In March 1963, India connived with exiled Tibetans to hold activities in New Delhi to commemorate the 4th anniversary of the Tibetan rebellion, supported secretly the "Tibetan government-in-exile" to announce the "Constitution of the Tibet" and open offices in New York and Geneva. In December 1965, India voted in support of a UN resolution condemning the Chinese government for violating human rights in Tibet. In a word, India repeatedly used the issue of exiled Tibetans

as an excuse to force the Chinese government to make concessions on the border dispute. As a result, China is more skeptical about India.

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

3.4 The Issue of Exiled Tibetans Left Both Countries With Too Much Historical Baggage to Deal With, Causing Unnecessary Drag On Both Countries

After the Dalai Lama and his followers' entry into the India-controlled area on March 31, 1959, bands of insurgents, together with Tibetan Buddhist and secular masses fled Tibet to India. The Indian government claimed that during the peak years from 1959 to 1965, India accepted more than 50,000 Tibetan “refugees”. Having trouble even in taking care of itself, India's acceptance of large numbers of exiled Tibetans resulted in a series of bad consequences domestically. Firstly, it constituted a lasting burden for the Indian society. India itself was a developing country with quite a lot of people still struggling below the poverty line. How to make tens of thousands of exiled Tibetans subsist and develop was a difficult problem which the successive governments of India felt hardly able to deal with. Secondly, it sowed the seeds for ethnic confrontations. In order to settle these Tibetans, the Indian government had to heavily expropriate the land of local inhabitants. This sparked the original inhabitants' enmity against these outsiders and up till now their disputes and conflicts still occur from time to time. Thirdly, these exiled Tibetans set an example to India's domestic separatist forces, which have been in existence for a long time because of India's numerous religions and nationalities. The Indian government's blatant support for the exiled Tibetans' attempt to split China not only hurt the feelings of the Chinese people and worsened Sino-Indian relations but also backfired on itself in that it encouraged the independence campaigns of the Sikhs, the Nagas, the Mizos, the Gorkhas and other nationalities. Fourthly, it formed a hidden cause for social upheaval. Over a long period of time, the exiled Tibetans only sojourned as refugees in India and are not allowed to own land or fixed assets, thus mostly living a miserable life. Under the instigation of the Tibetan Youth Congress and the Tibetan Women's Association, an increasingly large number of exiled Tibetans turned into fanatics, composing a potential unstable element in Indian society which has to be reckoned with.

By the same token, this issue has also been a persistent worry for the Chinese government. Firstly, the Dalai Clique frequently fabricated rumors on the international stage, which greatly harms the national image of China. Secondly, the Tibetan Secession forces continuously engage in infiltration and destruction in the disguise of religious and cultural exchanges, exerting a direct impact on the stability and development of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Thirdly, the Tibetan Secession forces' multipronged collusion with other reactionary forces poses a serious threat to China's reunification and national solidarity. Under the incitation and pairing of some anti-China forces, the Tibetan Secession forces successively collaborated with other separatist forces under the banners of Taiwan Secession, Xinjiang Secession, Hong Kong Secession, and even the so-called pro-democracy activists and the Falun Gong Cult, to wreak havoc on China's national security. Lastly, the indefinite final whereabouts of these exiled Tibetans add difficulty to China's management of this issue. Since the Dalai Clique refuses to give up its insistence on Tibetan Secession, many contacts and negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Clique produced no substantial achievement. At present, the 14th Dalai Lama walks into his late years and the Tibetan Secession forces are becoming increasingly radicalized. Therefore, this issue will be even thornier for the Chinese government.

4 REASONABLY EXPLAIN WHY THE ISSUE OF EXILED TIBETANS MUST BE RESOLVED

In the course of teaching the history of Sino-Indian relations, some students had proposed that since these Tibetans had fled overseas for nearly sixty years, and China and India are now in peace, can the resolution of the issue of exile Tibetans continue to be postponed? However, taking into account their domestic situations as well as their international environments, both countries deem it not only necessary but also urgent to come up with an early resolution.

From the perspective of China, this issue is a non-negligible obstacle inhibiting its peaceful development both in terms of its internal affairs and in terms of its diplomacy. Over the past decades, the troubles that the exiled Tibetans have frequently made both at home and abroad constitute quite a few obstacles for China's

peaceful development. The Tibetan separatists instigated riots in Lhasa successively in 1987, 1988 and 1989, severely disturbing the normal social order. In the 1990s, the Dalai Clique began to collude repeatedly with the overseas anti-China forces such as Taiwan secessionists, Xinjiang Secessionists and the so-called pro-democracy activists to engage in separatist activities. In 2008, the Tibetan secessionists once again staged an appalling March 14 incident of beating, smashing, looting and burning, killing 18 innocent civilians and causing a direct property loss of RMB 250 million. In addition, the Dalai Lama often goes to different countries, slandering the Chinese government and canvassing support for his secessionist schemes in the disguise of religion. The situation even worsens after Modi came to power. His government not only keeps creating tensions on border areas with an aim to blackmail the Chinese government, but also interferes in China's internal affairs by inviting the Dalai Lama to visit the so-called "Arunachal Pradesh" and instigating Lobsang Sangay, the leader of the so-called Tibetan Government-in-exile, to claim sovereignty over the Banggong Lake by planting flags there. Thus it can be seen that postponing the resolution of this issue not only affects the improvement of Sino-Indian relations but also threatens China's peace and stability, resulting in endless problems.

From India's perspective, this issue, producing increasingly prominent negative effects, has become a drag on its development and stability. First of all, China's countermeasures tortured India. In recent years, India complains constantly that it is unable to materialize its ambition of becoming a major world power since China set obstacles on its bid for a permanent membership of the UN Security Council and a membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) as well as the resolution of Kashmir conflict. If it continues to provoke China on the issue of exiled Tibetans in the future, India will sure encounter more countermeasures from China. Secondly, the lack of strategic mutual trust resulting from this issue gradually traps India into a security dilemma. In order to hedge against China, India crazily engages in military expansion and war preparation. However, with a territory being one third of that of China and its 2017 GDP only one fifth of China's 2017 GDP, engaging in unjust military ventures will only plunges it into a state of exhaustion, even of disaster. Lastly, the increasingly prominent radicalization of exiled Tibetans presents India with a Frankensteinian monster. With the Tibetan Youth Congress, the Tibetan Women's Association and other radicalized Tibetan Secessionist organizations growing stronger and insubordinate, terrorists' trend of thought advocating violence spreads like wildfire. If the Indian government gives a free rein to the radicalized Tibetan Secessionist organizations, the terrorism that they advocate is very likely to affect the local separatist forces in India, triggering even graver social upheavals and threatening its national unity.

5 CONCLUSION

To sum up, in order to objectively explain the issue of exiled Tibetans in teaching the history of Sino-Indian relations, we must make the students fully realize that Britain's colonial invasion of China's Tibet is the root of this issue and the crux of the matter is that India, indiscriminately inheriting legacies from British colonists, stubbornly sticks to the security strategy of treating China as its potential enemy, which was formulated by the British-Indian government, and keeps retaining exiled Tibetans and supporting their Tibetan separatist activities. If India continues to stubbornly adhere to its erroneous security strategy and fails to make an informed decision on the issue of exiled Tibetans, then mutual suspicion between China and India will be intensified and new confrontations and conflicts are likely to be triggered.

At the same time, it is necessary to remind the students that there will be no victor in their hostility. Now and in the foreseeable future, both countries are at a critical stage of striding across the middle-income trap in their socio-economic development. Both countries are in urgent demand of a peaceful international environment and a stable domestic situation to realize their economic ambitions, be it China's Silk and Belt Initiative or India's Look-East Strategy, Monsoon Plan, or Spices Road. If the two countries are still unable to establish strategic mutual trust due to the issue of exiled Tibetans, they may be trapped in an enduring strife of "security dilemma" eventually, taking lumps out of each other .in Asia for a long time, which would not only arrest their respective socio-economic development process, but would also bring great negative impact on world peace and development.

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