



**Droits et Démocratie
Rights & Democracy**

Centre international des droits de la personne et du développement démocratique
International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development



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Report

Policy Seminar with the Dalai Lama “Tibet-China Negotiations: Building Peace through Dialogue”

Ottawa, April 23, 2004

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1) INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit to Ottawa, Rights & Democracy, in collaboration with the Canada Tibet Committee, hosted a policy seminar entitled, "*Tibet-China Negotiations: Building Peace through Dialogue*". The seminar took place on April 23, 2004 and had three primary objectives:

- to encourage the Government of Canada to serve as an honest broker in efforts to convene negotiations between representatives of the Dalai Lama and Chinese authorities;
- to increase support for the Tibetan issue within Canadian policy circles;
- to highlight Canadian leadership in the area of peace-building and conflict resolution.

The seminar was chaired by Prof. Charles Taylor of McGill University and welcomed participants from the private sector, academia and non-governmental communities. The Dalai Lama was accompanied by prominent members of the Tibetan diaspora including Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairperson of the Tibetan Cabinet-in-exile and Kasur Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's special envoy to the Tibet-China dialogue. Although representatives of the Government of Canada were invited as key participants in the discussion, all declined the invitation and the government was represented by a desk officer attending in the capacity of observer. A full list of participants is attached to the end of this report (Annex 1).

Two background papers were prepared for the seminar. *Tibet-China Negotiations: A Case for Canadian Leadership* and *Economic Dimensions of Autonomy and the Right to Development in Tibet* (Andrew Fisher) are available in English and French on the Rights & Democracy website (www.dd-rd.ca).

This report summarizes the key themes that evolved during the various presentations, commentaries and discussion. A draft unedited transcript of all presentations and discussions is available upon request from Rights & Democracy in English only.

Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors of Rights & Democracy would like to extend its thanks to the seminar participants who travelled to Ottawa from across Canada in order to lend their expertise to a fascinating discussion not only about Tibet and China but also about ethics and power in today's world. We wish to extend special thanks to the seminar's Chairperson, Prof. Charles Taylor as well as to the presenters and rapporteurs, without whom the afternoon would not have proceeded as smoothly as it did. Rights & Democracy also wishes to express its gratitude to the Canada Tibet Committee for its valued support and collaboration throughout the organization of this event.

Finally, our deepest thanks and appreciation goes to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for agreeing to participate in this unique event and for gracing us with his words and insights.

2) SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening comments:

In welcoming the participants, **Kathleen Mahoney, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Rights & Democracy**, noted that Rights & Democracy has had a long history with the struggle for democracy and human rights in Tibet. In 1993, Rights & Democracy provided seed funding for the Tibetan government in exile to connect to the internet. This project opened the Tibet administration to the world by building its capacity to connect to the international community. In 1995, Rights & Democracy supported the participation of Tibetan delegates at the Fourth World Conference on Woman, held in Beijing. In 2001, Rights & Democracy funded the research and publication of a policy paper for the World Conference on Sustainable Development. The paper, *“Poverty by Design: the Economics of Discrimination in Tibet”*, by Andrew Fischer, has been widely distributed and has become a key resource for those interested in development strategies in Tibet and elsewhere.

Thubten Samdup, National President of the Canada Tibet Committee, noted that there is a renewed interest and support in Canada for Tibet. He announced that 165 members of the Canadian Parliament from all parties and all regions of Canada have endorsed a request to the Prime Minister that he promote Tibet-China negotiations. Samdup proposed that participants consider the following question during the seminar discussion: does Canada, as a country that promotes democracy and peace-building, have a responsibility to help Tibet with its on-going and non-violent struggle? Mr. Samdup argued that the occasion of the Dalai Lama’s visit to Canada provides the ideal opportunity to act and that Canadians have a responsibility to help Tibet in its non-violent struggle. If the Tibetan struggle is ignored, what message does that send to those who may be considering non-violent strategies for other struggles?

Jean-Louis Roy, President of Rights & Democracy, then welcomed the Dalai Lama to the meeting room. In introducing his Holiness, Mr. Roy highlighted the universal dimension of the Dalai Lama’s long-standing campaign for Tibet. The campaign, he said, embodies the fears and hopes of numerous small communities in their dealings with powerful political entities and institutions as they seek fundamental human rights. Mr. Roy noted that the fate of Tibet is closely linked to the fate of China and that the Dalai Lama’s proposed framework for negotiations is therefore based on respect, trust and mutual benefit. Furthermore, Mr. Roy expressed his deep concern with the public silence of the Canadian government concerning the situation in Tibet and the Tibet-China negotiations. Such silence, he added, is unacceptable when human rights abuses are tantamount to cultural genocide and when an ethnic cleansing is occurring in Tibet.

Keynote address by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama thanked the hosting organizations for convening the seminar. He said that the issue of Tibet is complex and of crucial importance for both the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. It has always been his belief that the best way to resolve any conflict is through non-violence and dialogue aimed at finding a mutually acceptable solution. Consequently, a solution to the Tibet issue requires careful consideration and serious deliberations from both sides before making any

decision. Taking into account today's new reality in which nations are interdependent and interconnected, His Holiness advocates a "Middle-Way-Approach" in order to address both Chinese concerns as well as the priorities of the Tibetan people. Tibetan priorities, he added, are to enjoy a life of freedom, peace and dignity.

His Holiness noted that Chinese authorities have consistently refused to admit the existence of a "Tibetan problem", insisting instead that the only problem is the Dalai Lama himself. His Holiness argues that the only issue is the 6 million Tibetans living in Tibet and that the current impasse benefits neither the Tibetan people nor the government of the People's Republic of China. The issue of Tibet is not simply one of human rights violations but it is also about the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity, the restoration of Tibet's pristine environment and the freedom of a people to decide their model of development. For example, many of the development projects undertaken in Tibet by the Chinese Government – purportedly for the benefit of the Tibetan people – are having negative impacts on the Tibetan people's distinct cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

His Holiness said that he has been encouraged by the recent improvements in the relationship between India and China, the two most populous nations of the world. He believes that better understanding between India and China are of vital importance for the peace and stability of Asia in particular, and in the world in general. His Holiness also feels that improved relations between these two countries will create a more conducive political environment for the resolution of the Tibetan issue.

His Holiness described his "Middle-Way" strategy for the Tibet-China negotiations. He re-affirmed that he is not seeking independence for Tibet or separation from China but rather a genuine autonomy, including a democratic system of governance for the three traditional provinces of Tibet. In such a context, it will be up to the Tibetan people themselves to decide the fate of the institution of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama said he is not seeking any political role in an autonomous Tibet. Under this approach, culture, religion, environment, agriculture and education would be under Tibetan administration but foreign affairs and defence would remain under the responsibility of the Chinese central government. His Holiness acknowledged that Tibet will continue to rely upon China for its economic development.

His Holiness concluded by observing that China is currently opening itself to the world. A constructive and flexible approach to the issue of Tibet, he said, will have a positive impact on its international image and it will be a key component of China's smooth transition into a modern, democratic and free society.

Discussant statements: Options and considerations for a review of Canadian policy on Tibet and on Tibet-China negotiations.

Note: The key-note address was to have been followed by a presentation from a representative of the Canadian government. In lieu of such a presentation, three discussants presented views as to how Canada might seize the current opportunity of renewed dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Chinese authorities, to encourage full negotiations.

Andrew Fischer, a development economist at the London School of Economics, provided participants with a brief summary of the development challenges in Tibet since the mid-1990's, particularly in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) where most of the funding from the central government has been channelled. According to Fischer, the essential dynamic in this region can be characterized as “exclusionary growth” in which large portions of the population – in this case the Tibetan population -- are not able to fully participate in the processes contributing towards growth or to reap the benefits from it. A primary reason for this is that economic and development policies are determined outside the Tibetan areas by non-Tibetans. These policies respond to needs of the Chinese state and society in general and not those of the Tibetan people. The result has been a rapid expansion of inequality in Tibet beyond anything else observed in China, even in Western China. This inequality is based primarily upon race.

For example, in 2001 the average urban household income in China was approximately three times the average rural household income. In Tibet, where most Chinese live in cities and the vast majority of Tibetans live in rural areas, that ratio was over 5.5. Even looking only at urban areas, inequalities in the TAR urban centres are among the highest in China. The urban household income in the TAR is the seventh highest in China, yet urban poverty is the third highest.

Another consideration when looking at development in Tibet and the challenges of bringing increased autonomy to the Tibetan people is the reality that the TAR is a key security zone, situated as it is on a high plateau looking down on the rest of Asia. The Chinese government maintains a strong military presence in the TAR due in part to its strategic positioning at the border of India. Consider this stark contrast – in China there are approximately 2.5 million Chinese soldiers for a population of 1.3 billion citizens which is a ratio of 1 soldier per 4,500 Chinese citizens. In the TAR, that ratio is 1 Chinese soldier per 20 Tibetans.

Mr. Fischer suggested that the Tibetan areas require a “Tibetan-ization of development policies, essentially placing Tibetans in charge of development policies and encouraging Tibetan ownership of the process”. He added that this does not mean simply participating in managerial decisions or managerial implementation but actually owning companies, developing skills, being employed and being educated in tandem with policies that will integrate Tibetans into the development that is taking place. There are already very effective Tibetan people inside Tibet trying to achieve these objectives and what countries such as Canada can do is to encourage a sort of relaxed policy space for this to take place. This is precisely where the international political process comes in. Canada should have a coherent development strategy towards the TAR and other Tibetan areas that address these super-structural issues.

Margot Franssen, President and Partner of the Body Shop Canada, dealt with the role of the business community in promoting human rights and fair trade in its trade relationship with China. She spoke about how the Body Shop implements its “Profits with Principles” philosophy. Under this philosophy, the Body Shop integrates human rights and environmental considerations into its business decision-making processes. It believes that the healthier the community in which it operates, the healthier its business relationship will be.

The Body Shop believes that the business community should make efforts to reduce the possible negative impacts of its operations abroad, to increase partnerships with community organizations

and to invest its resources and capacities for the promotion of social issues that are of concern to local communities. In the context of China, Ms. Franssen believes that the business community “wants to trade in China, but that it also wants to be able to tell customers about steps taken to ensure that such trade is equitable and fair.”

Ms. Franssen noted that the Body Shop has conducted a public national campaign in support of a Tibetan prisoner-of-conscience and that this has had no negative impact on relations with Chinese suppliers.

Elizabeth May, Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Canada, reviewed concerns regarding threats to Tibet’s environment stating that just as the Tibetan people are oppressed by Chinese occupation, so too is the Tibetan environment. Ms. May described China’s aggressive industrialization plan for Tibet as having both economic and very clear political motives. Mega-projects have been undertaken, with virtually no benefit for Tibetan people, but with the effect of changing the face of Tibet. Among these projects are the linkage of Tibet to China through East-West highways and the \$3.2 billion (US\$) railway from China to Lhasa, currently under construction. Both of these initiatives have serious environmental consequences.

Ms. May highlighted the South-North water diversion project and the many dams currently under construction or in the planning stages. These, she said, are a threat to Tibet’s water supplies and ecosystems. Massive deforestation threatens environmental sustainability in Tibet as well as contributing to flooding in south Asia. Conversion of grasslands to farmlands has increased erosion: the amount of degraded grassland in Tibet increased by 95% between 1989 and 1998. Uncontrolled mining is another serious problem with gold mines in particular polluting the surrounding environment. Ms. May believes that we, as Canadians, must help Tibet protect its environment. In doing so, the Dalai Lama’s leadership, teachings which are based upon non-violence strategies, are needed as never before.

General Discussion

Under direction of the Chair, discussion was opened to all participants. The discussion is summarized here and grouped by the rapporteurs within the major themes as they evolved.

The “Middle-Path” Approach

Participants requested more information from the Dalai Lama about his “Middle Path” approach to the Tibet issue and its possible contribution to China’s transition towards a more open society, governed by the rule of law and respectful of individual freedoms and liberties. Some participants raised the question as to whether or not it would be helpful for both Tibet and China to look, with the assistance of experts, at various options of federalism to solve some of the current difficulties, not only with Tibet but also with Taiwan. They suggested that this would be an area in which the Canadian experience of federalism and the recognition of Québec’s distinct society could provide a helpful model.

Many participants felt that the middle path strategy is coherent with Canadian foreign policy and that it provides a suitable basis for Canadian-Tibetan cooperation. Other participants suggested that Canadian involvement in such initiatives could be framed within a larger context, for example Canada could approach the Nobel Prize Committee to look at the possibility of establishing, an annual “Global Forum on Peace and Conflict Resolution” to discuss issues such as Tibet.

The relevance of current democracy struggles in Hong Kong and the recent elections in Taiwan in which 50% of the Taiwanese people expressed preference for a rapid pace towards independence and the other 50% for a slower process was also highlighted. Participants felt that these events were closely linked to the viability of China’s “one country, two systems” policy and that lessons learned could be applied to the situations in Tibet, East Turkestan and inner Mongolia. One participant suggested that an over-arching solution could take the form of some sort of confederation, possibly modelled after the European Union. In this regard, a resolution of the Tibetan issued built upon the Dalai Lama’s middle path approach, could offer two important advantages to China’s political and economic stability – first, recognition of the role of spirituality in the development of just societies and second, the experience of 40 years of democratic development in exile.

The Dalai Lama expressed his belief that many Chinese officials do not favour the current system although they do not have an informed idea of available alternatives. They view the situation as a choice between accepting the current system despite the resentment it generates, or risking a complete collapse of the system. The Dalai Lama believes that there is an alternative path for China – one that doesn’t involve the collapse and disintegration of the system. Rather it would be characterized by a smooth transition of the Chinese society toward democracy. Eventually China would be able to take its place as a respected member of the international community. The Dalai Lama believes that such a process is in the interest of all countries that interact with China either through trade or other international activities. China’s evolution towards an open society governed by the rule of law and respectful of individual freedoms and liberties is in the interest of all.

Mr. Lodi Gyari briefed the participants on the Dalai Lama’s Five Point Peace Plan proposal which takes into account the significance of Tibet’s geopolitical location. The Plan is not only a proposal centred on the interests of the 6 million Tibetans living on the Tibetan plateau, but also it takes into account the interests of the region with the goal of bringing about stability and peace to a conflict-ridden region. Specifically, relations between India and China will not be stable unless a solution on Tibet is reached.

Mr. Gyari added that although he believes that the best way to resolve the Tibet-China issue is to find a solution through the Dalai Lama’s “Middle-Path Approach”, a majority of young Tibetans want total independence from China. How the Tibetan sentiment will evolve in the future will largely depend on how the Chinese government reacts to the Dalai Lama’s proposal. If it responds positively and in a timely manner, those who feel unsatisfied with the middle path strategy will come around and accept it.

A Role for Canada

The absence of representation by the Government of Canada was a serious concern for several participants. One participant described the Government's decision as "disgraceful" and requested that the seminar hosts look into why one of the leading democracies in the world would remove itself from this occasion.

Mr. Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, stated that although the Government of Canada was not represented at the Seminar, participants could still encourage the government to support Tibet in specific ways during the coming months and years. He suggested that there is one area where Canada could be of immediate assistance to Tibet and three other areas, which could be looked at in terms of a longer term Canadian strategy.

In the short term, Mr. Gyari said, Canada could take advantage of its close relations with China to help the Dalai Lama to establish a negotiated settlement for Tibet. Mr. Gyari expressed his surprise at the apparent reluctance of the Government of Canada to support this effort. He could not think of any other western government that had not come out openly and forcefully in favour of a negotiated settlement between Tibet and China. Furthermore, he highlighted that many nations and western democracies had even explicitly supported the Dalai Lama's middle-path approach while others were clearly in favour of a negotiated settlement. Mr. Gyari expressed his hope that following the Dalai Lama's meeting with Prime Minister Paul Martin, the Canadian government might take a more proactive approach to this issue.

As a longer term policy, Mr. Gyari suggested that Canada might first take up the importance of protecting Tibet's culture and environment which are under threat as a result of the in-migration of large numbers of Han Chinese to the Tibetan plateau. The increasing numbers of people settling in Tibet have created an unsustainable pressure on the environment and have marginalized the Tibetan language and customs. Having met with environmental activists during this visit to Canada, Mr. Gyari understands that there is a great willingness among Canadian civil society to address these issues and Mr. Gyari hopes that protection of Tibet's environment will be something on which the Government of Canada plays a leading role.

Secondly, but related to the in-migration of Han Chinese to Tibet, is the economic marginalization of Tibetans as described earlier by Andrew Fischer. Aid agencies funding development projects in Tibet must respect: the right of Tibetans to have a voice in choosing the economic system they need. Right now, governments and aid agencies provide funds but project planning takes place in consultation with the central authorities. As a result, the funds sometimes support projects that further marginalize the Tibetan people.

Mr. Gyari noted that the Tibetan government in exile has recently come out with guidelines for development in Tibet. He asked that the Government of Canada disseminate these guidelines and that Parliament adopt and incorporate these guidelines as norms to be followed by Canadian corporations operating in Tibet. Such a process has already been done by the US Congress.

The final issue on which Mr. Gyari feels Canada could play a useful role is in the facilitation of non-governmental and academic research and advocacy on the Tibetan issue and on human rights in China more generally. In China today, there is an emergence of relatively independent think tanks. Some people in China are beginning to be bold enough not only to think differently, but also to write differently. Many of them support negotiations with the Dalai Lama. Mr. Gyari believes that

we need to start listening to a new generation of “experts” and to young Chinese scholars rather than continuing to listen to old-school politicians and academics who do not understand that China has vastly changed over the last 25 to 30 years.

During the discussion, many participants expressed their hope that Canada become an honest broker, or at least help mediate, an appropriate dialogue with the Chinese government. Based on the Dalai Lama’s position it should not be viewed as an audacious request. Senator Con Di Nino informed participants of the creation of a parliamentary friendship group called the “Parliamentary Friends of Tibet”. The objective of this new group, he said, is simple: to be the most effective friendship group on Parliament Hill, particularly to make sure that the issue of Tibet remains front and centre in the minds, eyes and ears of Canadians and to continue to sensitize the Government of Canada about the situation in Tibet. Senator Di Nino promised to seek his colleagues’ approval to make the situation in Tibet the first order of business for the upcoming study on human rights in China to be conducted by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Human Rights

Senator Di Nino also pointed out that there is another Canadian group which is constantly and continuously in contact with China – the business community. He believes that the business community should have a great deal of influence in China and that it too can be an ambassador for the Dalai Lama’s message. Mr. Gyari responded that the government in exile is making some efforts to reach out to the business community and that the Dalai Lama had been invited by many business groups to speak about business ethics. Many business leaders have very close relationships with the Dalai Lama and they are learning that this does not jeopardize their trading relationship with China, as stated earlier by the Body Shop representative.

Human Rights and Security

One participant expressed concerned with the degree to which the world’s attention to human rights violations in Tibet and other countries has shifted since the events of September 11th. He requested the Dalai Lama’s views on the global debate around security and human rights. The Dalai Lama responded that human rights violations and terrorism are symptoms which require a short and long term responses. A long-term response might be attention to alternative thinking regarding conflict resolution. For example our response to conflict or disagreement should not be the use of force, but rather research for innovative ideas of how to solve the conflict through dialogue.

Another participant talked about the importance of access to information as a basis for the development of democratic institutions in China. She noted that there is a revolution going on in China led by more than 80 million of Chinese “internet citizens” despite threats and intimidation by the Internet police. She pointed out that citizens are doing remarkable things with the Internet and that we must recognize the importance of this medium and support the citizens using the Internet at great risks to their security.

Another participant asked His Holiness if there was anything that could be done to support and help political prisoners as well as those that have been imprisoned in violation of their right to free expression. The Dalai Lama noted that many organizations have adopted the individual names of specific prisoners which is very effective. He mentioned a recently-made film by a young Tibetan Canadian girl who took a video message from His Holiness to Tibet and filmed people watching it

secretly. She filmed the reactions and comments of these people and smuggled the tape out of Tibet. The film will be screened at an upcoming film festival in Toronto. The Dalai Lama is concerned that the people who participated in the film will now be in danger. A similar film was done a few years ago by a reporter from the BBC and there were cases of people being imprisoned and tortured because they appeared in the film. His Holiness believes the film's message is important and asked that Canadian NGOs in the room follow-up to ensure those who participated in the film will not suffer any consequences.

Finally, the former Chairperson of the Rights & Democracy Board of Directors, Ms. Lois Wilson, applauded the Dalai Lama's Five Point Peace Plan for its comprehensive and holistic approach and far-reaching goal. She informed His Holiness that the Canadian churches have developed over the years, a partnership with Christian churches in China and that they could perhaps use this channel to promote new thinking within China. She also asked the Dalai Lama what role religious communities in Canada could play with regard to the Tibet problem. His Holiness responded that the issue of freedom of religion and freedom of faith should apply equally to all faiths in China and it should be promoted with regards to Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. His Holiness suggested that it would be helpful if Canadian churches could organize visits of delegations to China and that in doing so, the delegations should include representatives of various religious communities and traditions such as from the Islamic and Buddhist traditions.

ANNEX 1

List of Participants

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ANNEX 2

Policy Seminar with the Dalai Lama “Tibet-China Negotiations: *Building Peace through Dialogue*”

(Drawing Room, Château Laurier, Ottawa)

AGENDA

- 12:45 Registration and Security
- 13:30 Procedural Remarks from the Chair and Welcome from Hosting Organizations:
- Charles Taylor, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, McGill University
 - Kathleen Mahoney, Chairperson, Rights & Democracy
 - Thubten Samdup, National President, Canada Tibet Committee
- 14:00 Introduction of the Dalai Lama:
- Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy
- 14:15 **Keynote Address: His Holiness the Dalai Lama**
- 14:45 Presentation from the Government of Canada (to be confirmed)
- 15:00 Discussion: Options and Considerations for a Review of Canadian Policy on Tibet and the Negotiation Process between Tibet and China.
- Facilitated by Chair with discussants:
- Andrew Fischer, Economist, London School of Economics
 - Margot Franssen, President & Partner, Body Shop Canada
 - Elizabeth May, Executive Director, Sierra Club of Canada
- 16:30 Closing Remarks from the Chair
- 17:00 Cocktail Reception