



## The China-Tibet Issue

**For Prelims:** [China-Tibet Issue](#), Dalai Lama,

**For Mains:** Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests.

**Source:** [TH](#)

### Why in News?

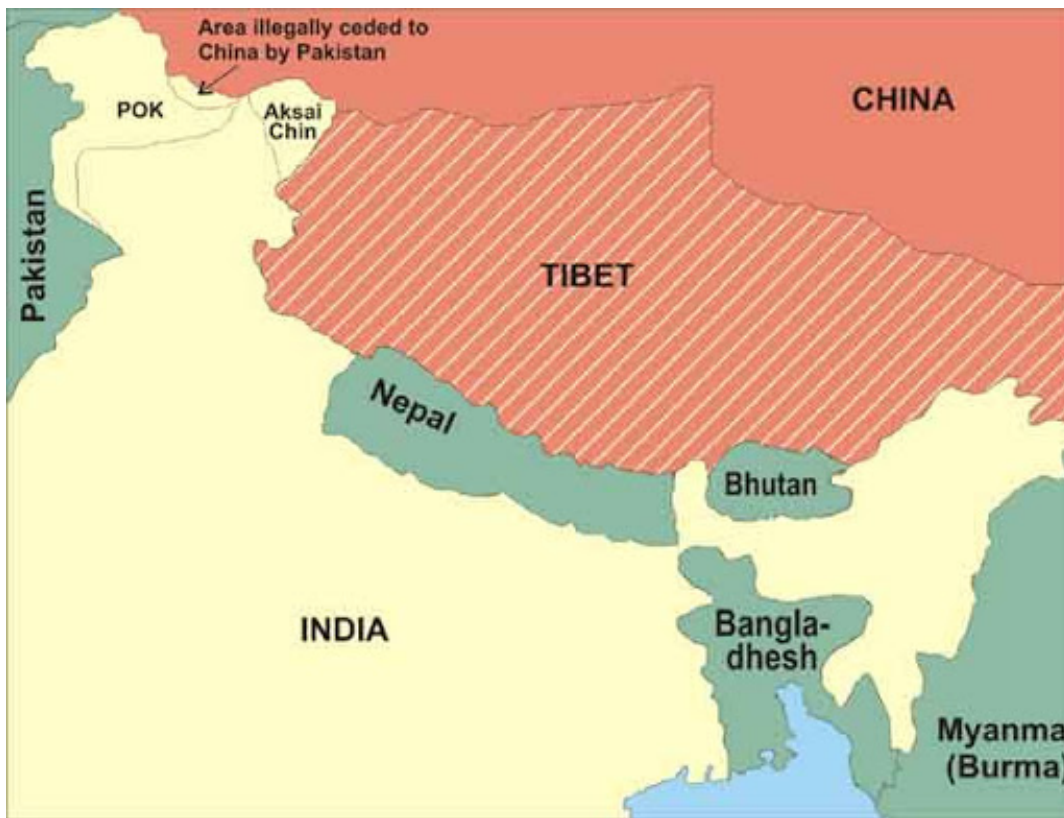
During a recent discussion with reporters in Dharamshala, the [Dalai Lama](#) reaffirmed his stance that **Tibetans seek greater autonomy within China**, emphasizing their desire for **self-governance** while remaining part of the People's Republic of China.

### What is the China-Tibet Issue?

#### ▪ **Tibet's Independence:**

- Tibet is a region on the Tibetan Plateau in Asia, spanning about 2.4 million km<sup>2</sup> - nearly a quarter of China's territory.
- It is the traditional homeland of the Tibetan people as well as some other ethnic groups.
- **Tibet is the highest region on Earth**, with an average elevation of 4,900 meters. The **highest elevation in Tibet is [Mount Everest](#)**, Earth's highest mountain, rising 8,848 m above sea level.
- The **13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso**, announced de facto Tibetan independence in early 1913.
  - **China did not recognize Tibet's independence and continued to claim sovereignty over the region.**

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- **Chinese Invasion and Seventeen Point Agreement:**
  - From 1912 until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, no Chinese government exercised control over what is today **China's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)**.
  - The Dalai Lama's government alone ruled the land until 1951. **Tibet was not "Chinese" until Mao Zedong's People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched in and Invaded Tibet.**
  - In 1951 Tibetan leaders were forced to sign a treaty dictated by China. The treaty, known as the **"Seventeen Point Agreement"**, professes to guarantee Tibetan autonomy and to respect the Buddhist religion but also allows the establishment of Chinese civil and military headquarters at Lhasa (Tibet's capital).
    - However, the Tibetan people, including the Dalai Lama consider it invalid.
    - This has often been described by the **Tibetan people and third party commentators as "a cultural genocide"**.
- **1959 Tibetan Uprising:**
  - Escalating tensions between Tibet and China led to a critical turning point in 1959 when the Dalai Lama, along with a group of followers, fled to India, seeking asylum.
  - Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama formed an exiled government based in Dharamshala, India, known as the **Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)**.
- **Aftermath of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising:**
  - Since the 1959 Uprising, the central government of China has been steadily tightening its grip on Tibet.
  - In Tibet today, there is **no freedom of speech, religion, or press and arbitrary detentions continue.**
  - Forced abortion, sterilization of Tibetan women, and the transfer of low-income Chinese citizens threaten the survival of Tibetan culture.
  - Although China has invested in infrastructure improvements for the region, particularly in **Lhasa itself**, it has also encouraged thousands of ethnic Han Chinese to move to Tibet resulting in demographic shift.

## What is the Impact of Tibet and the Dalai Lama on India-China Relations?

- For centuries, Tibet was India's actual neighbour, as most of India's boundaries and the **3500km**

**LAC (Line of Actual Control) is with the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and not the rest of China.**

- In 1914, it was Tibetan representatives, along with the Chinese that **signed the Simla convention with British India that delineated boundaries.**
- However, after **China's full accession of Tibet in 1950**, that China repudiated the convention and the **McMahon line that divided the two countries.**
- Further, in 1954, India signed an agreement with China, agreeing to recognize Tibet as **"Tibet region of China"**.
- The presence of the **Dalai Lama in India** has been a persistent irritant in **India-China relations, as China considers him a separatist.**
- **The Tibetan plateau's significance in terms of water resources and geopolitical considerations adds complexity to the [India-China-Tibet equation.](#)**

## What are the Recent Developments in Tibet?

- China has been building and developing next generation **infrastructure in Tibet**, such as border defense villages, dams, an all-weather oil pipeline, and internet connectivity projects.
- China is trying to **control the selection of the next Dalai Lama**, by promoting that Tibetan Buddhism has always been part of Chinese culture.
- The Indian government **doesn't give citizenship to Tibetans born in India after the cut-off year of 1987.**
  - This has created a sense of dissatisfaction amongst the youth of the Tibetan community.

## Dalai Lama

- **About:**
  - The Dalai Lama belongs to the **Gelugpa tradition of [Tibetan Buddhism](#)**, which is the **largest and most influential tradition in Tibet.**
  - There have been only **14 Dalai Lamas** in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, and the **first and second Dalai Lamas were given the title posthumously.**
    - **The 14<sup>th</sup> and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso.**
  - The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of **Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.**
    - Bodhisattvas are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain **Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings**, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.
- **Process to Choose Dalai Lama:**
  - The process to choose the Dalai Lama traditionally involves identifying the **reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama**, who is considered the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.
  - The search for the Dalai Lama's reincarnation typically begins after the **previous Dalai Lama's passing.**
    - According to Buddhist scholars it is the responsibility of the High Lamas of the Gelugpa tradition and the Tibetan government to seek out and find the next Dalai Lama following the death of the incumbent.
  - **If more than one candidate is identified**, the true successor is found by officials and **monks drawing lots in a public ceremony.**
  - The **selected child, usually very young**, is then recognized as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and undergoes a rigorous spiritual and educational training.
  - The Dalai Lama's role encompasses both **spiritual and political leadership** in Tibetan Buddhism, and the selection process plays a crucial role in Tibetan cultural and religious traditions.
  - This process can take several years: it took four years to find the 14th (current) Dalai Lama.
    - The search is generally limited to Tibet, although the current Dalai Lama has said that there is a chance that he will not be reborn, and that if he is, it will not be in a country under Chinese rule.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q1. With reference to Indian history, who among the following is a future Buddha, yet to come to save the world? (2018)**

- (a) Avalokiteshvara
- (b) Lokeshvara
- (c) Maitreya
- (d) Padmapani

**Ans: (c)**

**Q2. The painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani is one of the most famous and oft-illustrated paintings at (2017)**

- (a) Ajanta
- (b) Badami
- (c) Bagh
- (d) Ellora

**Ans: (a)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/the-china-tibet-issue>

