

---

## CHINA FACES MORE TROUBLE IN TIBET AS PROTESTS INCREASE

05.02.2012

---

Reuters, February 06, 2012 Beijing: China over the years has derided the Dalai Lama as a jackal in Buddhist robes, choreographer of a separatist Peking opera and, lately, instigator of a plot that led some Tibetans to set themselves on fire and other forms of protest. Even so, Chinas hardline rulers may have reason to miss him when hes gone. The aging spiritual leaders presence and message of non-violence have kept a damper on unrest but, once he dies, things could worsen rapidly. The protests in Tibetan plateau communities in Sichuan province in January follow a year in which at least 16 Tibetans – most Buddhist monks and nuns – have self-immolated in protests seeking a return of the exiled Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet. China has branded the immolators as terrorists and, in a familiar refrain, Beijing on Wednesday blamed Tibetan separatist forces for fomenting hatred among the people and sparking the protests that were put down by armed police using deadly force. With unrest in once-quiet areas of the Tibetan plateau and little prospect for direct talks between China and the Tibetan government-in-exile, concern is growing that violence will boil over upon the death of the Dalai Lama. With unrest in once-quiet areas of the Tibetan plateau and little prospect for direct talks between China and the Tibetan government-in-exile, concern is growing that violence will boil over upon the death of the Dalai Lama. Reuters If nothing changes, Beijing will likely respond with the same tough measures it has used for decades.

have hardened, A Khedroob Thondup, nephew of the Dalai Lama, told Reuters from his part-time home in Taiwan. The Dalai Lama has generally managed to restrain Tibets youth with his message of non-violence, said Thondup, a former member of the exiled government who traveled to China 15 times for official talks before negotiations went sour. The 76-year-old monk is in good health, Thondup said, exercising daily on a treadmill, with access to on-call doctors. He recently underwent cataract surgery in New Delhi but expects hell live at least another 20 years. long as His Holiness is alive, we are non-violent and respect his views, A said Thondup, who runs a centre for exiled Tibetans in Darjeeling, India. His Holiness were to suddenly leave the scene, yes, there will be many more problems for the Chinese government. A A taste of Whats to come The latest violence is the worst since riots killed at least 19 people throughout Tibetan parts of China in 2008. What Beijing terms the Tibet Autonomous Region has remained under tight security since. Overseas advocacy groups say up to seven Tibetans were shot dead and more than 60 wounded as police snuffed out the Sichuan protests. State media said police fired in self defence. Security forces have since thrown a blanket across a huge swathe of Tibetan China. Hundreds of kilometres from the scene of the Sichuan violence, police surrounded the town of Danba with road checks in an effort to prevent the Tibetan defiance from spreading and foreign reporters from entering. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were sealed off by police road blocks and an official turned back reporters, saying road conditions were unsafe. That may be just a taste of what is to come.

the centrality of the demand among Tibetans that the Dalai Lama be allowed to return to Tibet, were he to pass away in exile abroad, it could spark an unpredictable wave of protests far greater than 2008 and an even harsher crackdown, A Nicholas Bequelin, a researcher with Human

Rights Watch, said. China has relied on a blend of investment and repression for years, from the era of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping through almost a decade under President Hu Jintao, who is due to retire in a leadership transition that begins late this year. Indeed, Hu set the tone as a former Communist Party chief of the autonomous region in 1988-89. Authorities declared martial law in Tibet in March 1989 and launched a bloody crackdown on long-running protests linked to the 30th anniversary of the abortive uprising that led to the Dalai Lamas exile. Like Taiwan, Tibet is a red-line issue for Chinas rulers, who regard it as sovereign territory. The man in line to replace Hu, Vice President Xi Jinping, has done little to suggest he will take a softer line. Last year, Xi vowed to crack down on separatists at an event to mark 60 years since Tibets liberation. The thorny issue of reincarnation of the Tibetan spiritual leader also remains unresolved. The Dalai Lama has indicated he may break from tradition in calling for democratic elections or name his successor to prevent Beijing from meddling. Beijing rejects that option, citing historical and religious practice that one Dalai cannot choose another, and asserting its power to approve any reincarnation. Some fear China will simply name its own successor, dividing Tibetans and leaving them following different Dalai Lamas, one in Tibet and one in exile. Losing Tibet? Robbie Barnett, a Tibet expert at Columbia University, said the Dalai Lamas death in exile would be so significant to Tibetans it could ruin prospects for a reasonable Tibetan-Chinese relationship. If the Dalai Lama dies without any resolution, it will take a half century to build trust again, he said. A spiral into violence would spark international concern and could ignite greater political tensions with the West and neighbouring India which has a contested border with China and hosts the exiled Tibetan government. Some Chinese officials who believe you can tough these things out indefinitely which is true to some extent. But then it gives you a long-term and expensive budget problem, a credibility deficit and serious international ramifications, Barnett said. China stresses that it has helped lift Tibet out of poverty, spending more than 160 billion yuan and much more in subsidies over the past 60 years, providing the region with double-digit economic growth for 18 straight years. But analysts say its approach of boosting economic development while curbing freedoms has backfired, failing to win support in Tibet proper and driving ethnic Tibetans from surrounding provinces closer to the Dalai Lama. While Lhasa erupted in violence in the 1980s and 1990s, Tibetans in Sichuan, Qinghai and other regions were calm. Sichuan has also seen violence and even traditions are changing. Barnett said some in those eastern areas who typically celebrate their new year at the same time as most Chinese are delaying the holiday about a month to coincide with the new year of central Tibetans, who for centuries have been more closely aligned with the Dalai Lamas. China has turned vast areas of the Tibetan plateau into areas of Tibetan national sentiment, he said. They imposed this policy in eastern Tibet where there were no real problems historians are going to be asking why did we do this? Why did we lose Tibet?"

---

Kaynak/Source: