

Who Runs Tibet? China's Leadership.

CHINA'S COMPLEX AND FACTIONALIZED POWER STRUCTURES ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY OPAQUE on the question of Tibet, and the relevant government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials remain entirely unaccountable to the Tibetan people themselves.

Tibet continues to be controlled—both regionally as well as in relevant Party and government offices in Beijing—by a hard line conservative faction, made up of people whom several observers have noted over the years have based their careers almost entirely on being “anti-Dalai” and “anti-split-tist,” and who therefore have a vested interest in averting any kind of conciliation between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. While such “anti-Dalai” postures may have been key to advancing their own careers, the often stinging personal condemnations of the Dalai Lama have profoundly alienated the vast majority of Tibetans from the Chinese establishment in Tibet—long before any considerations of Tibetans’ growing social and economic marginalization are taken into account.

The Central State Leadership, Hu Jintao

Ultimate responsibility for China's policies in Tibet lies with China's President Hu Jintao, the most senior Party and government figure in the PRC. Hu has a particularly strong personal connection to Tibet, as the former Party chief of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) from 1988 to 1992, when he presided over the imposition of martial law, abruptly



Hu Jintao, Party Secretary and President of the People's Republic of China

ending a period of relative political liberalization and ultimately bringing himself to prominence within the Party.

Hu Jintao was among a core of senior Chinese leaders who met in Beijing in July 1994 at the “Third Work Forum” on Tibet to devise policies aimed at rapid economic development in Tibet while attempting to undermine loyalty to the Dalai

Lama; and as Vice President in July 2001, he participated in the “Fourth Work Forum,” where similar policies were consolidated under the imperative to “vigorously lead Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to socialism.”

TAR Party Secretary, Zhang Qingli

Zhang Qingli has been in the position of TAR Party Secretary since November 2005, and is also First Secretary of the TAR Military Sub-Region. He sits on the main Party body overseeing policy implementation in Tibet, the Central Tibet Work Coordination Working Group. Zhang's tenure has been characterized by increasingly hardline policies on the practice and institutions of Tibetan Buddhism,



Zhang Qingli, Party Secretary of the TAR

contributing significantly to the anger and despair that fuelled the protests and riots in the streets of Lhasa in March 2008. The hardline policies such as an intensified ‘patriotic education’ campaign that Zhang was in charge of implementing in the TAR, clearly failed to achieve the ‘genuine stability’ sought by the Party and exposed the estrangement of the government from the Tibetan people. His frequent and hostile

rhetoric against the Dalai Lama, whom he has described as “the biggest obstacle hindering Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal order,” and “a wolf in monk's clothes, a devil with a human face,” are deeply offensive to the majority of Tibetans, as are his claims that “The Central Party Committee is the real Buddha for Tibetans.”

Local Level Leadership, Governor of TAR, Pema Trinley

In January 2010, a former officer in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Pema Trinley (Chinese transliteration: Baima Chilin) was appointed Governor to the TAR. An Executive Deputy Chairman of the TAR since 2003, Pema Trinley served in the PLA based in Tibet from 1969 to 1986, and is likely to guide the continued implementation of harsh security policies in Tibet. He was also included in the Chi-

nese delegation that met with the envoys of the Dalai Lama in November 2008 during the eighth round of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. Upon his appointment, Pema Trinley stated that “Stability is of overwhelming importance. We will firmly oppose all attempts at secession, safeguard national unification and security, and maintain unity among different ethnic groups in Tibet,” (Xinhua, January 15, 2010). (For more information on his appointment, please see ICT report <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/leadership-shifts-tibet-indicate-party-priorities-military-control-and-‘stability’>.)

Pema Trinley is one of few ethnic Tibetans in the higher levels of local government—though, his position has not earned the respect of his fellow Tibetans. Ethnic Tibetans in the lower echelons of government are often seen by ordinary Tibetans as working to protect common Tibetan interests in the face of social and economic marginalization; however, senior officials such as Pema Trinley are unpopular among Tibetans for the active role they are perceived to play in enforcing and ‘validating’ deeply unpopular Chinese government policies in Tibet. (<http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/a-way-forward-tibet-perspectives-inside-china>.)

The United Front Work Department

The United Front Work Department (UFWD) is an organization within the Central Committee of the CCP that acts as a gate-keeper for “non-Party” groups and individuals, both foreign and domestic, engaging with the Party on a select range of issues. The Chinese officials who meet with the Dalai Lama’s special envoys are from the UFWD; however, as a gateway for contact to with the Party and government, the UFWD has little actual executive authority to affect policy change in China and Tibet.

Central Tibet Work Coordination Working Group

The CCP’s main body for coordinating policies on Tibet is known variously as the “Central Tibet Work Coordination Working Group” or the “Central Coordination Group on the Struggle Against the Dalai Clique.” Very little about the group or its workings is publicly known, and its existence is only occasionally and obliquely referenced to in China’s official press. The seniority of the group’s members—none of whom are Tibetan—and the broad spectrum of interests represented by their respective offices, suggests that the group acts more as a conduit through which existing policies are reviewed and refined prior to their implementation

in Tibet, rather than as a body for actually initiating and formulating policies. The working group met just five times between 2003 and 2006 according to research published by the CECC. (Please refer to ICT’s report “Tibet at a Turning Point” for more information on the UFWD and Working Group.)

Tibet Work Forum

The Fifth Tibet Work Forum, held on January 18-20, 2010, was the most recent in a series of rare strategy meetings on Tibet that have now been held just five times since the Chinese took over Tibet in 1949-50. The meeting was attended by more than 300 of China’s most senior Party, government and military leaders. The Fifth Tibet Work Forum emphasized plans for “leap forward development,” and bringing levels of income and other economic indicators into line with those in other parts of the People’s Republic of China. Past Tibet Work Forums have crystallized the Party-line on Tibet, most significantly with the Third Tibet Work Forum in 1994 which set forth an aggressive strategy of integration, fast-track economic development, and increased political repression following the large-scale demonstrations of the late 1980’s. (See ICT report “Top-level meeting in Beijing sets strategy on Tibet” <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/top-level-meeting-beijing-sets-strategy-tibet>.)