



# China: Communists Will Determine Tibet's Next Spiritual Leader

SINGAPORE — Zhu Weiqun, a former senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official, revealed in an interview recently that the Beijing regime would be the ultimate arbiter of the successor of the present Dalai Lama, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism.

In his remarks to the pro-CCP *Global Times* platform, Zhu said that after the passing of the present Dalai Lama, the CCP would take action to appoint a substitute who is in sync with Beijing's ideology. The *Times* further quoted Zhu as saying that the CCP takeover of Buddhist authority would be to lend "support and guide the work of finding the successor of the 14th Dalai Lama," and that the Beijing authorities would have to "finally approve" anyone singled out for consideration.

The Dalai Lama is the most senior of several "living Buddhas" — people perceived to carry Buddha within them.

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Positing that Chinese governments prior to communism were influential in deciding living Buddhas, so "this has already shown that the highest authority on the issue of the Dalai's succession does not belong to anyone, but is within the authority of the central government."

Zhu lampooned the Dalai Lama for having "betrayed the motherland" by dismissing communism and Chinese rule in Tibet. "He betrayed the motherland, trying in vain to turn the power belonging to the central government into his personal right, in order to achieve his separatist goals," Zhu said. "He also betrayed Tibetan Buddhism by trying to destroy its historical conventions. He turned Tibetan Buddhism into a tool of separatism."

The Dalai Lama is the highest authority in Tibetan Buddhism and is deemed by his followers as a reincarnation of Buddha himself. The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the 14th of his line and has been at the helm since 1940. Based on the religion, the Dalai Lama chooses who he wants to reincarnate into after death, or if he would reincarnate at all.

In 1995, the CCP allegedly made another living Buddha, the Panchen Lama, aged 6, disappear before replacing him with a communist-sanctioned choice. The authoritarian regime maintains the original boy is alive and living a low-key profile, but has failed to provide proof of their claims. The boy's safety and whereabouts have not been able to be authenticated.

As the incumbent Dalai Lama is at an advanced age of 87 years old, Tibetan Buddhists have voiced worries regarding his successor and the ensuing reaction of the CCP.



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Officially atheist, anti-religious, and a [persecutor of religious believers](#), the CCP permits only five religions to lawfully operate in China under its aegis — Catholicism (without Vatican jurisdiction), Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and Protestantism — with the condition that these religions promote CCP-sponsored propaganda.

Pro-Beijing Buddhist leaders eagerly back the CCP and lambaste the Dalai Lama, who for decades has been living in exile in India. Open advocacy for this leader from Buddhists has led — and will continue to lead — to imprisonment and other legal consequences.

Advocates of liberating Tibet from Beijing's influence have been termed by the CCP as "separatists." Tibetans have cried foul over a lack of sovereignty for their territory and massive discriminatory abuses against ethnic Tibetans, claiming the harsh conditions created by Beijing have made it impossible for them to live peacefully.

Xi Jinping, the authoritarian leader of the CCP who is currently implementing similar measures on a broader scale in neighboring Xinjiang, has unveiled efforts to eradicate the Tibetan language and forcefully separate Tibetan children from their parents to raise them ethnically Han and pro-communist. Xi's regime has been responsible for the detainment and imprisonment of at least half a million Tibetans in concentration camps.

*Bitter Winter*, a human rights magazine, claimed in 2021 that incarcerated Tibetan women were raped by Chinese authorities in charge of these camps. "Just like Muslim women in Xinjiang, lay Buddhist girls and nuns are also submitted to systematic rape in Tibet's transformation through education camps. This routinely happens to nuns, who are told that their bodies 'belong to the CCP' rather than to the monasteries," a Tibetan source disclosed.

"There is a political reason for this," the magazine explained. "Once raped, a nun will difficultly be taken back by her monastery, and should settle for a secular life."

Meanwhile, the president of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, cautioned the world while giving an interview with *PTI* that China would "definitely interfere" in the election of the 15th Dalai Lama after the current one dies.

"What happens after the present Dalai Lama is no more is a big challenge for the Tibetans, especially if the Sino-Tibetan conflict is not resolved," Tsering divulged. "We believe China will definitely interfere with the succession process of the Dalai Lama.... They have been preparing for that for the last 15 years."

Tsering alluded to the missing Panchen Lama as an illustration of what he surmised the CCP would try to do. "They (the Chinese) intervened in 1995 when they chose a boy (Gyancaïn Norbu) as the Panchen Lama," Tsering narrated. "The boy recognized by His Holiness (the Dalai Lama) as Panchen Lama (Gedhun Choeyi Nyima) was whisked away and we still have no news of whether he is alive."

Nyima was 6 when the current Dalai Lama nominated him as the Panchen Lama. A short while later, he and his entire family vanished into oblivion.

Tsering stated that his government-in-exile had prepared a 14-point plan to react to the CCP takeover of Buddhist authority after the Dalai Lama's death.

Comparing the CCP's attempt to nominate a successor to the Dalai Lama to former communist leader Fidel Castro appointing the pope, the prime minister of the government-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, told Reuters in 2015 that such a situation was impossible as communism is atheist by nature and deems



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religion as poisonous.

China annexed Tibet in 1950, and for the past seven decades has been attempting to assert control over the country by crushing the land's identity, meddling with Tibetan Buddhism, spreading propaganda, torturing Tibetans, and sending Han Chinese into the region.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama escaped to India with some thousand followers. He presently resides in Dharamsala with the government-in-exile.



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