

China gains from India's Tibetan bungle

By Peter Lee

China is looking on with a certain amount of satisfaction as India bungles the management of a key anti-China strategic asset - the Tibetan emigre and indigenous ethnic Tibetan Buddhist communities in north India - with a high-profile, borderline xenophobic campaign against the Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, a young monk widely viewed as the designated successor to the Dalai Lama as the symbol of Tibetan culture, religion and national aspirations.

Indian newspapers have been filled with accusations of financial misconduct, intention to evade currency and real estate laws, and, most provocatively, the claim that the Karmapa is a Chinese mole, receiving bricks of Chinese cash that he intended to use to establish a string of pro-Chinese monasteries on the Indian side of the border.

In the West - which tends to take a relatively simplistic view of emigre Tibetan affairs and the dharma-loving purity of Tibetan Buddhist monks - the plight of the Karmapa has been a bewildering shock. But from the perspective of emigre Tibetan politics and Indian security policy, the campaign against the Karmapa is not very surprising.

From the outside, the story of the Karmapa, known as Ogyen Trinley Dorje, is a recapitulation of the heroic foundation myth of the Tibetan emigre community personified by the 14th Dalai Lama.

Ogyen Trinley Dorje was identified and confirmed inside the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the reincarnation of the Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, as a child in 1992. In 1999 he escaped to freedom, appearing in Dharmasala, India, where he was embraced by the Dalai Lama. The charismatic young monk was promptly identified by many Tibetan emigres in Dharmasala and foreigner supporters of the Tibetan cause as a worthy successor to the Dalai Lama as Tibetan Buddhism's ambassador to the world.

This happy tale is, unfortunately, only part of the story.

The story of the Karmapa is also the story of violent, bloody and sometimes fatal struggles within Tibetan Buddhism, within the Kagyu sect itself, and the determination of India's security establishment to control Tibetan Buddhist affairs in the sensitive border regions.

There is little love lost between the Kagyu sect and the Dalai Lama's Gelugpa sect.

The Dalai Lama claims political and doctrinal ascendancy over the other Tibetan Buddhist sects by virtue of the Gelugpa sect's political dominance of Lhasa and the Tibetan heartland since the 17th century. The stated hierarchy is Dalai Lama first, followed by the Panchen Lama, and the Karmapa in third place.

The Kagyu sect - also known as the Black Hat sect by virtue of the magical headgear woven of goddess hair worn by the Karmapa on ceremonial occasions - disputes the presumption of the Dalai Lama to speak on its behalf. Kagyu adherents point out that the Karmapa holds precedence as a reincarnation over the Dalai Lama since the Karmapa reincarnation was initiated over 100 years before the first Dalai Lama was enthroned. The seat of the Karmapa was the Tsurphu monastery inside the present-day PRC; the 16th Karmapa fled to Sikkim with the Kagyu sect's most important regalia and treasures, and established an imposing new seat called Rumtek a few miles outside the Sikkimese capital of Gangtok.

This institutional friction was exacerbated in the 1960s when the Dalai Lama's decidedly un-Buddhist brother, Gyalo Thondup - who was the US Central Intelligence Agency liaison for the secret war against the Chinese occupation of Tibet - spearheaded the creation of a "united front" that would centralize the control of the fractious emigre community and sects under the control of the government in exile in Dharmasala. The other sects were apparently loathe to bow to Gelugpa control and formed their own political organization, the "Fourteen Settlements" group under the leadership of Gungthang Tsultrim.

In 1977, Gungthang was assassinated. His assassin allegedly told police that he had been paid \$35,000 to commit the crime by the [Tibetan] government-in-exile, and further alleged that he had been promised a bounty of double that amount to kill the current Karmapa. [1]

Efforts to centralize control of the emigre community collapsed, leaving a residue of bad feeling between Gelugpa and Kagyu leaders.

The situation was complicated by a split within the Kagyu sect itself upon the death of the 16th Karmapa in 1981. The conflict boils down to the rivalry between two Rinpoche in the Kagyu order, Tai Situ Rinpoche and Shamar Rinpoche ("Rinpoche" is an honorific typically applied to reincarnated lamas).

They have battled for decades over control of Rumtek and its ecclesiastical and worldly treasures (which are now in legal limbo; Indian courts have awarded control to a trust established by Shamar Rinpoche, but the local

government has not taking the politically traumatic step of evicting the partisans of Tai Situ Rinpoche, who actually occupy the facility). [Actually, the trust in question is the *Karmapa Charitable Trust*, that was formed not by Shamarpa but the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpae Dorje. LT.]

[www.tilogaard.dk/Investigations_into_the_Rumtek_case.pdf & www.tilogaard.dk/Two_Karmapas.pdf]

They also continue to battle over the very identity of the 17th Karmapa.

Tai Situ Rinpoche claimed to have found a secret note from the 16th Karmapa that directed him to the boy subsequently acknowledged by the Dalai Lama and enthroned in 1992 as Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa.

Shamar Rinpoche had none of that, asserting that a dream led him to a different Karmapa, one Trinley Thaye Dorje, whom he quietly brought to India from the PRC and enthroned in 1994.

Adherents of Shamar Rinpoche consider Ogyen Trinley Dorje's acknowledgement by the Dalai Lama as a piece of low, Gelugpa skullduggery. An America student of Shamar Rinpoche, Erik Curren, wrote a book on the Karmapa controversy titled "*Buddha's Not Smiling*". Talking to Asia Times, Mr Curren characterized the elevation of Ogyen Trinley Dorje as a virtual coup d'etat against the Kagyu sect by the Dalai Lama, with the intention of elevating an easily-manipulated son of nomads to the position of Karmapa.

Shamar Rinpoche's followers have also hinted that a neutral Rinpoche [i.e. *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*] was murdered during the trip to Tibet to find Ogyen Trinley Dorje so he wouldn't complicate the selection process. They have also alleged that the young man now in Dharmasala isn't even Ogyen Trinley Dorje at all.

They claim that the real Ogyen Trinley Dorje was afflicted by a learning disability that rendered him incapable of performing the duties of the Karmapa; therefore, according to the accusation, Tai Situ Rinpoche introduced an impostor, an older relation of the boy, to take his place.

Allegedly, this boy was too old to be the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa (he would have been born before the previous Karmapa passed on); the records of the medical examination performed upon his arrival in India - that would have demonstrated that his "organs" were too developed to be consistent with his stated age - have, in the best conspiratorial tradition, disappeared.

The most useful accusation against Ogyen Trinley Dorje - one that attracted the close and hostile attention of the Indian security apparatus - is that his

patron, Tai Situ Rinpoche, is colluding with the PRC to extend Chinese influence into India's Himalayan border regions.

The Indian views on Tai Situ Rinpoche are laid out in a secret memo dated 1997 from India's Chief Secretary in Sikkim, K Sreedhar Rao [www.tilogaard.dk/K_Shreedhar_Rao_s_report_on_Rumtek_-_1998.pdf], to the Indian cabinet on the issues involved in the struggle between Tai Situ Rinpoche and Shamar Rinpoche to control and occupy Rumtek.

As reproduced as an appendix in Mr Curren's book, Rao's suspicions concerning Tai Situ Rinpoche are manifest.

The first major area of concern is that, after Tai Situ Rinpoche identified the Karmapa, he took him to Tsurphu Monastery, the traditional seat of the Kagyu sect inside China, where he was enthroned with the support of the Chinese government, and received a "highly visible, ostentatious reception" in Lhasa. Indeed, Ogyen Trinley Dorje is the only major Tibetan religious figure acknowledged both by the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.

The report goes on:

The Chinese Connection And Role Of Tai Situ Rinpoche

It would appear from the above that Tai Situ Rinpoche group had wittingly or unwittingly played into the hands of the Chinese. However, reports indicate that the Tai Situ who is a Tibetan national, had been visiting Tibet on and off and in 1984 ~ 85 he traveled extensively and drafted a program for so-called development of his country ... What is noteworthy is that throughout his report he talks about friendly connections between the Chinese and the people of other countries, study of the Chinese language and study of Chinese medicine. He talks about Chinese in the most friendly terms referring to the Chinese as Chinese brothers. He talks about Chinese brothers living abroad as well.

He talks about the autonomous region of Tibet and indicates that his plan has the honest intention to benefit the people of China and in particular the autonomous region of Tibet, Sitron, Yunnan, Gangshuo, etc. He profusely thanks the two leaders of China, namely, Hu Yao Ban and Deng Xiao Peng as well as other leaders of China for their excellent political stance. The report of Tai Situ Rinpoche is addressed to the Director of Chinese Communist Government. All this indicates that Tai Situ had built up a good relationship with the Chinese possibly from 1984.

It would be appropriate to consider the Chinese interest in this entire matter at this stage. ...It is not inconceivable that having established their right to recognize the reincarnates, the Chinese would not hesitate to identify the successor to the present Dalai Lama, when the time comes ... It is also important to note that along the entire Himalayan belt right from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh the influence of Tibetan Lamaistic Buddhism is extensive with a string of monasteries.

It is reported that the Chinese have been making efforts to penetrate into these monasteries and as of now no less than eleven monasteries are headed by Lamas who can be considered as proteges of China. It would be most undesirable to allow the Chinese to extend their influence in this manner and it is in this context that the present situation in Rumtek needs to be carefully viewed. [2]

A 1998 suit filed by a follower of Shamar Rinpoche further accused Tai Situ Rinpoche - and the Dalai Lama and his brother - of scheming to seize Rumtek, destabilize Sikkim, and hand it over to the Chinese. [3] [Shamar Rinpoche has declared that he has nothing to do with this particular suit, that *Lama Shree* from Mungod in Bihar has filed in the Court. Lama Shree is an Indian national and a student of the late 16th Karmapa and acting on his own behalf. LT.]

Certainly, beyond pleasant Buddhist platitudes concerning universal brotherhood, Tai Situ Rinpoche has made no secret of his efforts to re-establish his position inside Tibet with the help of the Chinese government.

He has rebuilt his traditional seat, *Palpung Monastery*, in western Sichuan province. His lavish website offers gorgeous views of the monastery and states that 300 students and 50 monks reside there.

For its part, the Chinese government appears to encourage the establishment of Tibetan organizations overseas that are affiliated with partisans of Tai Situ Rinpoche and promote Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the Karmapa.

In India, Tai Situ Rinpoche's reception has been less friendly. The Indian government banned him from entry into India from 1994 to 1998 (he travels under a Bhutanese passport [this information appears to be incorrect. LT.]). His travel to the Himalayan border regions is restricted to Himachal Pradesh, where the Tibetan government in exile is located, and where his main facility inside India, *Palpung Sherabling*, is located. He cannot travel to the Northeast, Jammu / Kashmir, or Sikkim, where Rumtek is located. [4]

In a striking contrast to Western perception of Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the adored heir apparent to the Dalai Lama, the Indian government actively restricts his movements as well. In addition to limitations on his domestic

travel - he has tried to visit Sikkim on several occasions but been refused - the Indian government blocked his attempt to go to Europe and make a second trip to the United States in 2010.

With the Dalai Lama aging, it may have become a matter of some urgency to the Indian government that Ogyen Trinley Dorje not enhance his prestige, political influence, and financial clout in the West, thereby placing his perceived pro-Chinese patron, Tai Situ Rinpoche, near the heart of the emigre Tibetan movement.

But even if his access to support in the West was restricted, there was still the issue of the insistent and unwelcome pressure from Ogyen Trinley Dorje's well-organized and financed supporters inside Sikkim, demanding that he be allowed to enter Rumtek. In September 2010 the "*Joint Action Committee*" organized 30,000 people - the largest gathering in the history of Sikkim - demanding the Karmapa's return, raising the dismaying specter of organized, determined opposition to Indian objectives in yet another sensitive border area. [5]

The Indian government abhors the idea of Tai Situ Rinpoche acquiring the prestige and wealth of Rumtek and its affiliated facilities around the world - reputed, and undoubtedly with exaggeration, to exceed \$1 billion - and with it an independent pro-Chinese presence in Sikkim. [This estimation of the 16th Karmapa's wealth is unconfirmed though widely communicated by journalists and probably based on a theoretical value assessment of the fabulous antique reliques in Rumtek and the rather large holding of land around this monastery in Sikkim. LT.]

An interesting indication of burgeoning Indian hostility toward Ogyen Trinley Dorje may have come in January 2011 with the reported downgrading of his security classification from the coveted Z+ (the prestigious highest classification, involving 36 personnel) on the grounds that the large resulting motorcade improperly implied the Karmapa's parity with the Dalai Lama.

When the blow fell, it was courtesy of the provincial government of Himachal Pradesh, run by the Hindu-chauvinist *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) party. After a car belonging to an associate of the Karmapa was inspected on January 26 (itself perhaps an indication of heightened scrutiny), revealing a suitcase of cash, the Karmapa's residence - the Gyuto Tantric Buddhist and University - was raided. The eager Indian press was deluged with information concerning the suspicious mounds of cash - allegedly worth US\$1 million if the face value of supposedly counterfeit rupees was counted - found in the residence, including the equivalent of over one hundred thousand US dollars in yuan notes.

Thukchuk Lachungpa, a spokesman for a pro-Ogyen Trinley Dorje organization in Sikkim, provided a detailed and rather persuasive rebuttal to the charges in a live chat on IBN. [6]

But the Indian media was hungry for red meat, and the Indian government was happy to put Ugyen Trinley Dorje on the menu.

The local prosecutor stated he was "not happy" with the Karmapa's reply to his 50 queries. [7]

Then the government declared that the land on which the Karmapa's temporary residence stood had actually been acquired illegally. [8]

The anti-Karmapa wind in the Indian press continued with the Times of India reporting that crucial medical records - that might have revealed the Karmapa as an over-age imposter - had vanished. [9]

India's *The Telegraph* provided the insinuations - or trial balloons - from inside the Indian government concerning the Karmapa's possible arrest and deportation as a Chinese "agent of influence":

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The government is not ruling out the arrest of Ugyen Trinley Dorje, though sources said the external affairs ministry would have a major say on any such move regarding the controversial 26-year-old India believes is China's "strategic asset".

The sources said if charges were pressed, Dorje could face arrest and deportation. But to arrest Dorje, state police would have to first take Delhi's consent because the matter concerns a foreign national.

Delhi suspects the money seized from Dorje's residence was meant to set up China-friendly Tibetan institutions in the Indian Himalayan region but is weighing its options aware of the sensitivity of the issue. The government believes Dorje is a "strategic asset" of Beijing, which "stage-managed" his headline-making "escape" from Tibet to India in January 2000.

"We are not saying he is a spy but is certainly a strategic asset for Beijing," said an intelligence official.

Himachal Pradesh's top cop, Director General of Police *D S Manhas*, made it clear that more than an investigation into currency irregularities was at work. He made an effort to tie together all the strands - Karmapa, Tai Situ Rinpoche, the Chinese, and sinister Western adherents - into one web:

He said that Tai Situ Rinpoche, who stood third in the Kagyu hierarchy, after the 16th Karmapa and Shamar

Rinpoche came to India in 1998, after a gap of about four years. "The Govt of India vide its letter of 4 Aug 1998 to the chief secretaries of J & K [Jammu and Kashmir], Sikkim, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Arunachal and Mizoram specifically mentioned that his entry be debarred into their states", he claimed.

Asserting that the obvious reason for banning his entry into these states, except perhaps J & K, could be because of his alleged Chinese connection and that he may ferment [sic] trouble in these states, as there was a controversy over the 17th Karmapa, he said that he is now said to be the teacher of Ugyen Trinlay Dorje.

"Besides, when the Govt of India refused permission to the 17th Karmapa to move to Rumtek, Ugyen Trinlay Dorje sent another request that he be allowed to move to Tserabling monastery, which is owned by Tai Situ, but even that permission was refused", he maintained.

"Incidentally, though Tai Situ is Tibetan, he travels all over on a diplomatic passport issued by the government of Bhutan. How he got it, is anybody's guess", he added.

He said that though it was said that the 16th Karmapa had not left behind a "perdition [sic] letter", Tai Situ claimed to have a copy of the letter, on the basis of which he found Ugyen Trinlay Dorje and was instrumental in his anointment as the 17th Karmapa, which was even recognized by Beijing. "This is the only instance when a high profile Tibetan lama has been recognized by Beijing, and taken to Beijing with his family", he said.

The DGP said that according to the People's Daily, a Chinese daily, the 17th Karmapa at the closure of an official function in Beijing even shouted 'long live People's Republic of China', which indicates that perhaps he had been indoctrinated by the government of that country.

He said that another important factor was that a German national, Roslia Findeisen, a close associate of Tai Situ was externed from India on 28th Nov 1993, allegedly for her Chinese links, but when one Chen Luaan, a politician from Taiwan having pro-People's Republic of China leanings came to India, she also managed to come to the country and meet him.

Manhas said that the main concern of the Himachal Pradesh Police is why is the People's Republic of China is interested in setting up Tibetan monasteries across the Himalayan states close to the border and if there are any linkages or leanings of certain people in these monasteries with the country, as the recovery of the large number of yuan suggests. [10]

A report by the news agency DNA revealed that police had seized Chinese SIM cards - and that the Indian government had been intercepting the Karmapa's phone calls:

Even as enforcement directorate (ED) officials grilled Ogyen Trinley Dorje and his staff for over five hours on Tuesday, seeking details of the foreign currency recovered from his monastery, it has been testified that the 17th karmapa was in "constant touch with the Chinese authorities" and his prolonged stay in Himachal Pradesh "could be a security threat".

Regardless of the denial by the Chinese government, senior officials have found evidence in recorded phone conversations that the Tibetan monk, who had made a mysterious entry to the country in 2000, has maintained close ties with China.

Almost all monasteries run by the Karmapa are located in strategically-sensitive areas where there are key army and air force installations.

Himachal Pradesh CM Prem Kumar Dhumal is believed to have briefed Union home minister P Chidambaram in Delhi on Tuesday.

Of the five sim cards recovered from the karmapa's monastery, three are Chinese, and officials said "it has been established beyond doubt that the karmapa's advice was taken by the Chinese government from time to time on monasteries coming up in Beijing".

"The taped conversations also show that the karmapa has been discussing Indian government's plans about Tibetans in exile and other related policy issues," a senior officer said. [11]

The Himachal Pradesh government may have been out in front of the instinctively cautious national leadership of [India's primeminister] Manmohan Singh and his Congress Party, or executing a strategy that the center approved of, albeit in a dismayingly clumsy fashion.

In any case, there was little indication that New Delhi objected to the high-profile pursuit of the Karmapa. RAW - the Research and Analysis Wing, India's CIA - and IB (the central government's Intelligence Bureau) descended on Dharmsala and participated in the Kharmapa's interrogation. According to the local inspector general, the central government's Enforcement Directorate decided to proceed with the investigation of the Karmapa's possible violation of currency laws. The Enforcement Directorate appeared in Dharmsala and highlighted the foreign menace, according to the Times of India:

"We know of four - five major monasteries in the northeast and Ladakh where we have seen significant money coming from Chinese individuals," a senior official said. Among the monasteries receiving Chinese funding are those in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. "The funding comes from Chinese individuals and not any state agencies," the official said.

Another official said they also had evidence of unaccounted money flowing in a big way into various high profile monasteries from American and European sources. [12]

Perhaps because of the ad hoc nature of the assault by the Himachal Pradesh government, or because of the serial ineptitude of the Indian government in dealing with border security, ethnic, and confessional issues, the authorities were apparently unprepared to deal with an outburst of anger from the Tibetan emigre community and from indigenous Indian Buddhists.

Mass demonstrations were organized both in Dharmsala and in Sikkim, the site of the Rumtek monastery. (At the protest in Sikkim on February 5, the organizers took time out to burn Erik Curren's book, *Buddha's not Smiling*, another indication of the bad blood between Tai Situ and Shamar Rinpoche adherents.) [13]

Pro-Ogyen Trinley Dorje activists in Sikkim dispatched a 425-person delegation to New Delhi to protest. Tibetan NGOs - including representatives of virtually all of the more militant, viscerally anti-Chinese secular Tibetan independence organizations - and distinguished activists such as Tsering Woeser and Tenzin Tsundue went on the record deploring the Indian moves against the Karmapa. The Dalai Lama and the parliament of the Tibetan government-in-exile spoke out in support of Ogyen Trinley Dorje.

Behaving more like a minister in Egypt than an official in the world's largest democracy, on February 4, Himachal Pradesh's Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal "yesterday appealed devotees and followers of the 17th

Gyalwang Karmapa not to carry out solidarity processions for the Buddhist leader saying it might cause law and order situation in his state." [14]

Faced with an outpouring of anger from the very same Tibetan Buddhist polities that New Delhi was trying to control and direct, the central government reportedly backed down, advising the Himachal Pradesh authorities to "go slow". [15]

What the cash / Karmapa controversy has revealed, more than the fraught nature of succession to the Dalai Lama's role as spokesperson for Tibetan aspirations, or the ugly state of affairs within the Kagyu sect, is the clumsy attempts of the Indian government to manage the affairs of the Tibetan Buddhist communities inside India.

Their efforts have not received a great deal of effective help from Shamar Rinpoche or his protege, [Karmapa] Trinley Thaye Dorje. Despite their freedom to travel domestically and internationally (Shamar Rinpoche is a US citizen), the two Buddhist reincarnations have been relatively ineffective in mobilizing grass-roots support for themselves.

Whether this reflects Shamar Rinpoche's laser focus on the dharma, his obliviousness to anything beyond his desire to wrest control of Rumtek from Tai Situ Rinpoche, or a willingness to let the Indian government do his dirty work for him, his cause has become marginalized among Tibetan Buddhists inside India.

Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the alleged Chinese agent of influence, has wrapped himself in the mantle of the Dalai Lama, cautiously criticized China, and become the focus of the hopes of independence activists to reconcile the religious and secular forces in the emigre community after the Dalai Lama's passing. Shamar Rinpoche and Trinley Thaye Dorje, on the other hand, have done nothing to align themselves with the anti-Chinese nationalist aspirations of the Tibetan emigres.

In an interview with an Indian news agency, Shamar Rinpoche provided little more than a dismissive shrug on the issue of the Chinese occupation of Tibet:

While Tibetan activists around the world seek greater support for their cause, the Shamarpa, the top monk of one of the oldest Tibetan schools of Buddhism, believes that too much international pressure on China may only make things worse for the community.

According to the revered monk, who forms the second line of reincarnation of Karma Kargyu order of Tibetan Buddhism, emergence of China as a strong power is a fact that Tibetans

can do nothing about, and should hence take steps towards reconciliation, rather than pinning hopes on global support.

"Internationally, I don't think pressure is good ... China is becoming very powerful, and more pressure will only explode things," the 14th Shamarpa Mipham Chokyi Lodro, told PTI in an interview.

US President Barack Obama's visit to China in November last year had left disappointed many who felt he could have used it to press for better human rights situation in Tibet.

However, the Shamarpa says, "there is hardly anything anybody can do about it". [16]

Shamar Rinpoche's proposed solution to the Karmapa controversy has also done little to rally support for his position.

He proposes that there be two Karmapas: Ogyen Trinley Dorje takes over the traditional Kagyu seat at Tsurphu, inside the PRC, while his candidate, Trinley Thaye Dorje, takes over Rumtek. On one level this looks like a reasonable, Solomonic split-the-baby approach that avoids an embarrassing open repudiation of the Dalai Lama's endorsement. On another level, it looks like an backhanded acknowledgement of the essential meaninglessness of the supposedly sacrosanct Karmapa selection process, a snide reference to Tai Situ Rinpoche's China links, and a somewhat self-serving proposal that Ugyen Trinley Dorje be given suzerainty over the bombed out rubble of Tsurphu while Shamar Rinpoche and Trinley Thaye Dorje enjoy the prestige, wealth, and power associated with Rumtek.

Shamar Rinpoche adherents claim that the persistent pressure and large demonstrations in Sikkim - which have forced an apparently unwilling Sikkimese government to frequently if insincerely petition New Delhi to permit the return of Ogyen Trinley Dorje - are externally-financed exercises in Astroturfing orchestrated by Tai Situ Rinpoche.

However, the fact remains that Ogyen Trinley Dorje has the Dalai Lama, the government-in-exile, Dharmasala's secular NGOs, an aggressive local organization in Sikkim, and, quite probably, a majority of Kagyu followers on his side. Trinley Thaye Dorje's support - concentrated among the fraction of top Kagyu lamas loyal to Shamar Rinpoche and within the Indian government and intelligence establishment - is virtually invisible by comparison.

Professor Dibyesh Anand of London's University of Westminster, the author of 'Geopolitical Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination' told Asia Times Online:

The problem with Indian strategic thinking on Tibet is that it is often short-termist. Clearly, it is in Indian nationalist interest to either keep out of the reincarnation controversy, or persuade the rivals to resolve it once and for all, or to even back Ogyen Thinley Dorje (Ogyen Trinley Dorje). Those who believe that Indian national interest will be served by supporting [the] Shamarpa-backed Karmapa, while the Dalai Lama, most of other religious leaders, and Tibetans support Ogyen Thinley Dorje, are delusional.

Now the Indian government - which is currently dealing with the fallout from its catastrophically botched handling of border and nationality issues in Kashmir and the neighboring nation of Nepal - can add anger and distrust in the Tibetan emigre community in Himachal Pradesh and organized hostility among Buddhists in Sikkim to its list of self-inflicted wounds.

In a commentary for the Hindustan Times, Anand wrote:

The Indian media's onslaught on the Karmapa will only reaffirm Tibetan respect for the Karmapa [Ugyen Thinley Dorje]. But it will certainly backfire for India as followers of Tibetan Buddhism in exile, in the border regions, in Tibet and in the rest of the world, will resent this humiliation of the religious figure. Had it been the Shahi Imam or Baba Ramdev, would the media have taken such liberties in going to town with such an unconfirmed story?

Hardline officials in China must be laughing their heads off at the Indian media circus. They know that this will not only create confusion in the exiled Tibetan community in India, but will also create a disenchantment about India among Tibetans inside China ... we must not forget that the exiled lamas provide a stability and keep the people in the borderlands pacified in a manner more effective than the Indian military. Tibetans are over-generous with their gratitude to their Indian hosts and are hesitant in reminding India of a small inconvenient truth: until 1951, the disputed border regions were neither Chinese nor Indian but Tibetan. In return, the very least Indians could do is not malign Tibetan religious leaders before they are even proved guilty of their misdemeanor. Is that too much to ask? [17]

An apparent Indian answer is the reported plan by the Himachal Pradesh government to "set up an investigation wing to keep a tab on the activities of the 27,542 Tibetan exiles settled mainly in and around Dharamsala," in the

words of the news agency DNA - in other words, apparently treat them as a potential Chinese fifth column. [18]

Phayul amplified:

[Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh] Mr Dhumal also reportedly told the chief ministers' conference on internal security here that he has asked the prime minister to clarify whether the Tibetans were 'exiles or our guests'.

"The state government will set up Tibetan Refugee Unit (TR Unit) in state intelligence department to effectively monitor activities of 27,542 Tibetan refugees living in the state," he said, according to a statement from Himachal Bhawan.

Dhumal also said the state government will set up Tibetan Refuge Cell at Dharamshala in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs.

The refugee unit would be set up in consultation with the union ministries of home affairs and external affairs, the official statement said. [19]

All China has to do is sit back and observe the turmoil.

Notes

[Additions inside square brackets in red, subscribed with: LT, are Lama Tendars comments.]

1. Buddha's Not Smiling, Western Shugden Society, Dec 3, 2009.
2. Buddha's Not Smiling, Karmapatorumtek.org.
3. Rumtek row: Member sees bid to secede from India, Indian Express, Oct 22, 1998.
4. Mystery Monk - Tai Situ can cut deals with Beijing and have an entry ban lifted in Delhi, Karmapa.org.nz, Feb 7, 2000.
5. 30000 Sikkim People March for return of Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorjee to Rumtek, Phayul, Sep 28, 2010.
6. Karmapa Controversy, IBN Live, Feb 7, 2011.

7. Karmapa's replies unsatisfactory, to be questioned again: Police, Times of India, Jan 30, 2011.
8. More trouble for Karmapa as Sidhbarri monastery construction found illegal, Times of India, Feb 4, 2011.
9. Disputed medical records of Karmapa go missing, Times of India, Jan 30, 2011.
10. Karmapa suspected to have Chinese links: Himachal police, The Economic Times, Feb 4, 2011.
11. Enforcement directorate claims karmapa was in constant touch with Chinese authorities, DNA, Feb 1, 2011.
12. Dorje arrest not ruled out, The Telegraph, Feb 4, 2011.
13. Public meet in support of Karmapa held in Sikkim, iSikkim, Feb 5, 2011.
14. Himachal CM asks Karmapa followers to stop solidarity marches, Phayul, Feb 4, 2011.
15. New Delhi gets prudent on Karmapa issue, Tibetan Review, Feb 11, 2011.
16. Too much global pressure on China won't help Tibetans, Karmapa.org.nz, Sep 5, 2010.
17. Buddha's not smiling, Phayul, Feb 2, 2011.
18. Enforcement directorate claims karmapa was in constant touch with Chinese authorities, DNA, Feb 1, 2011.
19. Centre investigating the seizures at Karmapa's residence: Himachal CM, Phayul, Feb 1, 2011.

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