

**CHINA'S TIBET PROBLEM:
STILL NO WAY OUT?**

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Executive Summary

Tibet is part of China. Beijing does not tolerate any challenges to China's sovereignty over Tibet. This has been, and will continue to be the bottom line of Beijing's Tibet policy.

Beijing has effectively strengthened its rule in Tibet since 1959, but has failed to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetans.

China's leaders have realized that there are serious problems in Beijing's Tibet policy, leading to policy disputes among Chinese ruling elites. But it is wishful thinking that China's leaders would yield to pressure and seek substantial compromises unless the situation is stabilized.

China's leaders can see that their handling of the Tibet issue will have a substantial impact on China's foreign relations as well as international image. Thus, Beijing has maintained direct communications with the Dalai Lama, and agreed to "continue" with the dialogue should the Dalai Lama help stabilize the situation and denounce Tibetan independence.

The unprecedented solidarity movement among the Chinese around the world has provided Beijing with solid support. But the Chinese leaders know too well the danger of riding on the tiger of nationalism and leaving the nationalistic frenzy unchecked.

China's leaders can see the benefits of reconciliation with the Dalai Lama, but they are also worried about its political consequences – a resourceful political figure with global influence, the Dalai Lama's return could inspire anti-government activities in and outside China.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile have to be held responsible for the unrests in the Tibetan areas and demonstrations around the world,

which provoked certain level of violence and caused the loss of life and property damages in China.

The Dalai Lama and his associates have realized the danger of squandering their capitals and even losing control of the situation. They therefore have taken some measures to prevent escalation and have reached out to Beijing for dialogues.

Although the recent “informal meeting” between the Chinese officials and the Dalai Lama’s envoys in Shenzhen on May 4 did not register any “breakthroughs,” it was nonetheless a positive development given that both sides are willing to continue with the dialogue.

Both sides have realized that confrontation goes nowhere and have made a formal commitment to the dialogue as the first and necessary step toward the final solution to the Tibet problem.