



## ■ A Chronology of the Middle Way Approach

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*This timeline does not attempt to be exhaustive, but rather, gives the key points in the evolution of the history of the Middle Way Approach.*

- 1949** The People's Liberation Army of China invades and starts to assume control of Tibet.
- 1951-1959** In 1951, the Chinese government force the Tibetan representatives to sign the "17-Point Agreement on Measures for Peaceful Liberation of Tibet". The Chinese government violates the provisions of the agreement and fails to abide by it.
- 1959** With resistance taking place in various parts of Tibet in the late 1950s, a National Uprising also breaks out in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, in March 1959. Chinese forces crush the uprising, leading to the deaths of 87,000 Tibetans in seven months. Fleeing the Chinese occupation of Tibet, approximately 80,000 Tibetans follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama across the Himalayas and into exile in India, Nepal and Bhutan.
- 1959-1974** Thanks to the support of the Government of India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama makes a base in exile in northern India. He first settles in Mussoorie and then later in Dharamshala, where the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is established. In the coming years, with the support and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA, Tibetans in exile concentrate on establishing themselves in communities around the world. During this period, the UN General Assembly adopts three resolutions on the issue of Tibet, in 1959, 1961 and 1965.

- 1974** After 15 years in exile, and taking into consideration the gravity of the situation inside Tibet and the need to alleviate the suffering of Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama envisions a win-win proposition to solve the issue of Tibet. He holds a series of discussions with the Kashag (CTA/ Tibetan cabinet members), leaders of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE), and trusted friends of Tibet. An internal decision is taken to pursue a policy of autonomy– the “Middle Way” – rather than separation from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). This policy comes to be known as the Middle Way Approach. (Tibetan: “Umaylam”)
- 1979** Chinese paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, states that, “apart from independence, all issues can be discussed” and offers talks with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since the Middle Way Approach has already been developed, a positive response is sent to Deng Xiaoping, beginning a long period of contact and discussions between Dharamshala and Beijing.
- 1979-1985** China accepts four fact-finding delegations to Tibet, in August 1979, May 1980, June 1980 and June 1985. The delegations are enthusiastically received by local Tibetans. They visit various parts of Tibet, including Lhasa, Shigatse, Lhokha, Kongpo Nyingtri, Sakya, Lhuntse, Tsona, Tsethang, Gyantse, Choekhorgyal, Sangagchoeling and Yartok Nakartse in U-Tsang; Kanlho, Siling, Golok, Malho, Ngaba and Zoega in Amdo; Nagchu, Chamdo, Dege, Kardze, Nyarong, Gyalthag and Markham in Kham. In 1982 and 1984, Chinese leaders meet exploratory delegations from Dharamshala for talks in Beijing. Following the 1985 fact-finding delegation, China refuses to receive further missions. No reason is given.
- 1987** His Holiness the Dalai Lama addresses the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus and presents a Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet, proposing the Chinese government to start earnest negotiations based on the Middle Way Approach.

- 1987-1989** In 1987, a large-scale peaceful street protest which breaks out in Lhasa is brutally suppressed by Chinese forces. A new wave of repression and arrests ensues. Following continued peaceful protests, China declares martial law in Lhasa in March 1989.
- 1988** In 1988, His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents the Strasbourg Proposal in the European Parliament, which elaborates on the Five-Point Peace Plan. In September, Beijing announces its willingness to negotiate with Tibetans and says that His Holiness the Dalai Lama can choose the date and venue for negotiations. Welcoming Beijing's willingness, Dharamshala announces a six-member Tibetan negotiating team. Before the talks can begin, the Chinese government reverts to its former hard-line position and says that the Strasbourg Proposal cannot be the basis of talks.
- 1989** His Holiness the Dalai Lama is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his advocacy for a peaceful solution to the issue of Tibet based upon an approach of tolerance and mutual respect.
- 1992** His Holiness the Dalai Lama declares the Strasbourg Proposal invalid due to a lack of positive response from the Chinese government.
- 1993** With Beijing failing to reciprocate the numerous diplomatic initiatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 14 years of formal contact with the Chinese government come to an end. The next year, 1994, Beijing holds the third "Tibet Work Forum" during which it adopts a hard-line policy on Tibet. This marks a significant shift from the more open approach of earlier forums.
- 1994** Given Beijing's change in stance, His Holiness the Dalai Lama proposes a referendum of the Tibetan community be held for future dealings with China and to reorientate the course of the Tibetan freedom struggle.
- 1997** In September 1997, based on the preliminary opinion survey and reflecting the Tibetan people's profound trust in His Holiness the Dalai

Lama, the TPIE adopts a unanimous resolution stating that he should, in the future, be the sole person to take decisions on Sino-Tibetan issues. The TPIE further resolves that whatever decisions His Holiness the Dalai Lama takes will be regarded by all the Tibetan people as being the equivalent to a decision reached through a referendum.

- 1998** During the 39th anniversary of the Tibetan people's National Uprising Day on 10 March, His Holiness the Dalai Lama in his public statement responds to the events of the previous year, thanking the people of Tibet for the trust and hope placed in him and reiterating his commitment to the Middle Way Approach.
- 2001** His Holiness the Dalai Lama addresses the plenary session of the European Parliament, urging the resumption of dialogue.
- 2002** Dialogue with China resumes with the first of what will become nine "rounds of talks" based on the Middle Way Approach. The 1<sup>st</sup> round of talks between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the Chinese government takes place in September 2002 in Beijing. This is followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> round in May-June 2003 in Beijing; 3<sup>rd</sup> round in September 2004 in Beijing; 4<sup>th</sup> round in June-July 2005 in Berne, Switzerland; 5<sup>th</sup> round in February 2006 in Guilin city in China; 6<sup>th</sup> round in June-July 2007 in Shanghai and Nanjing; an informal meeting in May 2008 in Shenzhen; 7<sup>th</sup> round in June-July 2008 in Beijing; 8<sup>th</sup> round in October-November 2008 in Beijing and 9<sup>th</sup> round of talks in January-February 2010 in Hunan province and Beijing.
- 2008** During the first half of 2008, unprecedented and widespread protests break out across Tibet. At the 7<sup>th</sup> round of talks with the Chinese government in July 2008, Chinese negotiators ask the Tibetan leadership to put in writing the nature of the autonomy it seeks. The *Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People* is presented during the 8<sup>th</sup> round of talks in October-November that year. The *Memorandum* elaborates how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the PRC constitution and Law on National

Regional Autonomy – defines areas such as the “application of a single administration for the Tibetan nationality in the People’s Republic of China”, the “nature and structure of autonomy” and the “11 Basic Needs of Tibetans”. The Chinese leadership rejects the proposal, falsely claiming that the *Memorandum* includes references to a “Greater Tibet”, “Higher Degree of Autonomy,” “covert independence” and “independence in disguise”.

**2009** Tibetans begin setting themselves on fire to protest against the Chinese government’s continued occupation of Tibet and political repression, religious persecution, cultural assimilation and economic marginalisation of its people and environmental destruction. While attempting to take their lives, self-immolators consistently call for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for the Tibetan people.

**2010** To address the Chinese government’s concerns about and objections to the *Memorandum*, the Tibetan leadership presents a *Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People* during the 9th round of talks. The *Memorandum* and the *Note* describe how a genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the People’s Republic of China: its constitution, territorial integrity and sovereignty, its ‘three adherences’<sup>1</sup> and the hierarchy and authority of the Chinese Central Government (CCG). The *Note* further addresses specific concerns raised by the Chinese government with respect to the form of single administration; political, social and economic systems; public security; regulation of population migration; language; and religion. The Chinese government once again refuses to accept the proposal.

**2011** After President Barack Obama meets with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in July 2011 the White House applauds “the Dalai Lama’s commitment to non-violence and dialogue with China and his pursuit of the Middle Way Approach,” and encourages the relevant parties to engage in “direct dialogue to resolve long-standing differences”, saying that “a dialogue

that produces results would be positive for China and Tibetans.” The Tibetan leadership, headed by the Sikyong, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, reiterates its firm commitment to the Middle Way Approach and clearly states that dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the Chinese leadership is the only way forward.

### Today

So far, 130 self-immolations have taken place inside Tibet since 2009. Dialogue between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership remains stalled. Meanwhile, many governments – including the U.S., European Union, France, Japan, Australia, Brazil, and New Zealand – hail the dialogue process as a viable and reasonable way forward. Despite worsening conditions inside Tibet and self-immolations now numbering more than 130 people, the Tibetan people’s commitment to the Middle Way Approach is unwavering. They are buoyed in their faith in the policy by growing support from the international community, including the many Chinese who believe in peace and justice. ●

<sup>1</sup>The ‘three adherences’ as stipulated by the Central Government are: (1) the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; (2) socialism with Chinese characteristics; and (3) the Regional National Autonomy system.