

## 2009-2010 Tibet in Parliament

Details and links of when and how Tibet has been raised in the UK parliament during the parliamentary session 2009-2010

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### Useful addresses & links

6 April 2010: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Tibet: Politics and Government

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish a mechanism to monitor progress in the talks on Tibet between the government of China and the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We, alongside our EU counterparts, will continue to monitor progress on the dialogue. We urge all sides to maintain dialogue in good faith. This is the only way to achieving lasting stability and prosperity in Tibet.

House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Tibet

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the human rights record of the Government of China, with particular reference to Tibet.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Our annual human rights report outlines our assessment of the current situation in Tibet. We remain very concerned about human rights there. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary reiterated these concerns, and the need for meaningful autonomy for Tibetan people, during his recent visit to China. This was also a key focus of our human rights dialogue.

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30 March 2010: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Tibet

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised the issue of Tibet during his recent visit to China.

Chris Bryant: During my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's visit to China he raised the issue of Tibet with Premier Wen and Foreign Minister Yang. He expressed our continued concern at the situation in Tibet, including the heavy security presence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and religion. He welcomed the resumption of the talks between the Chinese authorities and representatives of the Dalai Lama but emphasised that the talks must be substantive to be successful.

Following this visit, the UK and China held a human rights dialogue on 18 March 2010. At this we pressed for access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region for diplomats and journalists and expressed concern over the numbers in detention following the March 2008 unrest, and related death sentences. We also expressed concern over cultural rights and religious freedom in Tibet. In advance of the dialogue we handed over a list of individual cases of concern, which included 17 Tibetan cases. We have yet to receive a response on any of the cases.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has just published its annual report on human rights. China was once again listed as a country of concern. A copy can be found on the FCO website. In it I have made clear that promotion of human rights is a fundamental part of our relationship with China. Significant progress has been made in economic and social rights, with 500 million raised out of poverty in just 30 years. But progress in civil and political rights has been much slower. It is in our interests to help China move towards greater respect for human rights, transparency and accountability.

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23 March 2010: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Tibet: Politics and Government

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to endorse the practical measures suggested by the Tibetan envoys at the China-Tibet talks in January 2010 and to encourage the Chinese authorities to respond positively to them.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We welcome the fact that talks between the Chinese Government and representatives of the Dalai Lama have taken place.

It would be inappropriate for the UK to endorse positions taken by either side in negotiation.

We believe that progress depends on both sides continuing to engage in dialogue in good faith. This is the only way to bring about a lasting and peaceful solution to the problems in Tibet.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised the issue of Tibet (a) privately and (b) publicly during his recent visit to China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: During my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's visit to China he raised the issue of Tibet with Premier Wen and Foreign Minister Yang. He expressed our continued concern at the situation in Tibet, including the heavy security presence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and religion. He welcomed the resumption of the talks between the Chinese authorities and representatives of the Dalai Lama but emphasised that the talks must be substantive to be successful.

Following his visit, the UK and China held a human rights dialogue. This was a further opportunity for us to raise our concerns about Tibet. In advance of the dialogue we have handed over a list of 42 cases, of concern, a number of which relate to Tibet, affecting 56 individuals.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the decision by the Chinese authorities to resettle Tibet's 2.25 million nomads into urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In his work report of the Chinese Government to the National People's Congress, Premier Wen Jiabao said that the Chinese Government would build permanent housing for nomads. He also promised to "give high priority to protecting the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities and the ecosystems in ethnic minority areas".

Staff at our embassy in Beijing have discussed the Government's policy of encouraging nomads to move to fixed settlements with local government representatives in Tibet, who justify it by the need to improve access to public services such as health and education and in order to protect fragile high-altitude grasslands from overgrazing.

Without free media coverage and transparent democratic governance there it is impossible for the Tibetan community to express its views on this policy.

We encourage the Chinese Government at every opportunity to promote the cultural rights of Tibetans and freedom of expression in Tibet.

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10 March 2010: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Home Department: British Nationality

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people of each nationality were granted UK citizenship (a) between 1980 and 1987 and (b) between 1988 and 1997; and how many have been granted UK citizenship since 1997.

Alan Johnson: The available data for 1977 to 2008 are given in the following table. Data for 2009 are scheduled for publication in May 2010.

Statistics on persons granted British citizenship by previous nationality, type and category of grant are published in table 4 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "British Citizenship Statistics United Kingdom, 2008". This publication may be obtained from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics website at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html>

Previous nationality	1977-87	1988-97	1998-2008
Tibet	10	0	10
China*	12,930	7,245	25,070

\* Includes Macau and Taiwan.

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2 March 2010: Oral Answers to Questions Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tibet

Norman Baker (Lewes) (LD): What representations he has received on the effects on the indigenous Tibetan population of his Department's change of policy in relation to the status of Tibet.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband): The decision to update our position on Tibet brought the UK into line with international partners, including the United States, and the position of the Dalai Lama himself. It gives us a stronger platform to raise the issues that matter to the people of Tibet, and we have been raising those issues. I have been very clear in my contacts with the Chinese leadership that we have serious concerns with the human rights situation and the lack of meaningful autonomy in Tibet. I have urged them to engage in dialogue, and I will do so again when I visit China later this month.

Norman Baker: I am grateful for the response that I have been given, and I recognise that the Government have been doing lobbying of that nature, but I am concerned that there has not been one single concrete achievement for the Tibetan people as a consequence of that change of policy. I do not refer to the visit to Tibet by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Lewis), as that was not for the Tibetan people. Can the Foreign Secretary, in all honesty, point to a single thing that has been achieved for the people of Tibet arising from that change?

David Miliband: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. In the end, the test is whether there is an improvement in conditions on the ground. If we are to have any kind of engagement on that internal issue, we have to do so through forums such as the human rights dialogue that we have now established with China, in relation to which there has recently been a visit to Tibet. Such engagement is important, and I look forward to reporting back on the discussions that I shall have in China later this month.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) (Lab): Has my right hon. Friend any information about the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, who was for all practical purposes kidnapped at the age of five or six by the Chinese Government and has not been heard of since, even now, about 15 years later? Has my right hon. Friend ever asked the Chinese about the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama?

David Miliband: Yes; the issue is raised regularly. It was raised most recently by my hon. Friend the Minister of State during his visit to Tibet, but no we have never had an answer.

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1 February 2010: House of Commons Written Answers: Tibet: Politics and Government

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the political situation in Tibet.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We discuss Tibet regularly with the Chinese authorities at all levels. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has raised Tibet with President Hu and Premier Wen. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has also discussed Tibet with State Councillor Dai Bingguo and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

Our interest is in sustainable development and long-term stability for Tibet, which can be achieved only through respect for the rights of Tibetan people and genuine autonomy for Tibet. Substantive dialogue between Chinese authorities and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the best way to achieve this. We welcome the announcement of the resumption of dialogue between the Chinese authorities and the representatives of the Dalai Lama and urge both sides to approach the dialogue in good faith.

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#### EDM 713 SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH SENTENCE FOR TENZIN DELEK

26.01.2010, tabled by Baker, Norman

That this House notes that 26 January 2010 marks the seventh anniversary of the failed appeal by Tibetan Buddhist Lama, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, against the death sentence he received in December 2002 following a closed-door trial that failed to meet even the most minimal international legal standards; further notes Ministers' public statements voicing serious concerns that international fair trial standards were not met in recent trials in China and Tibet; calls on the Government to do more than voice concerns at this ongoing lack of observance by China's internationally accepted due legal processes and an individual's right to a fair trial; urges the Government to set out and implement policies that encourage the Chinese government to bring China's legal system in line with those that are internationally accepted and draw up benchmarks for tangible progress; further calls on the Government to appeal for clemency or a re-trial for Tenzin Delek, whose death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2005 but who is now suffering grave ill-health with high blood pressure, heart and leg problems; and further notes that over the summer of 2009, 40,000 Tibetans in Tenzin Delek's community in Lithang, Tibet, signed petitions asking for justice and a re-trial for Tenzin Delek.

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#### 19 January 2010: Topical Question at Foreign Affairs Questions

Norman Baker (Lewes) (LD): Last year, the Government changed their long-standing position on the status of Tibet to recognise Chinese sovereignty, despite the fact that it has no historical basis. The Chinese secured a major diplomatic victory as a consequence, but the Government said at the time that the decision would enable progress in Tibet. Can the Minister point to one single concrete achievement for Tibet that has resulted from that badly judged decision?

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I can; I was the first British Minister ever to be allowed to visit Tibet.

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#### 13 January 2010: Excerpt from Debate on China, Westminster Hall

[Link to full debate \[here\]](#)

Derek Wyatt (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Banbury (Tony Baldry) on introducing what is yet another debate about China. It always grieves me that these debates have to be in Westminster Hall. Yesterday we had a debate about the Goldstone report—a really critical debate about Palestine. Where was it? It was in Westminster Hall. There were so many hon. Members here that not everyone could be called to speak. I ask that the Government sometimes rethink their priorities on foreign affairs.

Let me make a couple of points in response to the hon. Gentleman's speech, much of which I agree with. He did not say much about the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, but we need to move faster on China's membership of both bodies. After all, Belgium and Luxembourg have more votes than China on both, and we know their GDP is much

bigger than China's-[Laughter.] If we do not move faster, the time will come when America and the rest of the world want the dollars that are in Beijing and Shanghai, but China will say, "Do you know what? We don't like your banking systems. We don't like your IMF and World Bank. We'll set up our own system." We should not think that they will not do that.

One of the big issues that we misunderstand is that the Chinese-much like Israel-do not need the western world as much as the western world thinks that it needs them. If the Foreign Office misunderstands that, the consequences will be very serious. One way in which we could be more proactive is by saying that although it might have been right in 1945 for the World Bank, the IMF and the United Nations to be in Washington and New York, it is not right today. One thing that we could do is move one of those organisations to China. If China is to be the world's leading economic power by 2020, it is incumbent on us to help it with its political understanding of the world, and moving an international organisation there will move Chinese diplomacy on light years.

I make that point in the light of discussions about Google last night and this morning. When Google went into China, it agreed to censorship rules that went against America's first amendment, which is a completely back-to-front philosophy for Google's owners to adopt, given where they come from, their background and the fact that the company's chief executive is a Republican. In any case, Baidu, the Chinese search engine, is much bigger in China than Google, so perhaps this is not about the number of attacks on Google. After all, Google is the greatest technology company in the world and should be able to handle such attacks, which happen to every company. I think that there are between 5,000 and 10,000 a day-I would love to see the figures-but that, in a sense, is an aside.

On Akmal Shaikh, the real issue was that the trial lasted for just half a day. In relation to China's human rights and the style of its legal system, we are asking the Chinese whether such trials, which create tension between countries, could be open not only to the Chinese public, but to non-Chinese, so that we can see that justice is done. That is the crux of the issue in such cases.

I turn now to my own thoughts about China. I place on record my thanks to the Industry and Parliament Trust, which took me to Shanghai in 2008. In September last year, I also went on an amazing visit to Beijing with the all-party group on China. We made the 25-hour train journey to Tibet, where I learned a good deal more about Tibet. Those who have not understood what is going on in China should consider the fact that Russia and Canada, where the temperature can be minus 20° C, have had trains for considerably longer than China has. However, although the temperature on the railway that we used is sometimes minus 35° C-it goes up to 15,000 feet-the service has not missed a single day, while the services in Canada and Russia both have. In other words, the technology in China is the finest in the world, and we misunderstand how fast things are progressing.

To give another example, more university papers were published in China in the past year than in the whole British university system. If we use such figures for university research to judge universities, China is already ahead of us. The pace of change is substantial, but that change is not just economic; it is fundamental and it is taking place at every level.

In addition to those two visits, I have been to Hong Kong, where I was brought up as a child. Although I am not writing my autobiography, I am working on a major work called "The Foreign Office: A Disaster Abroad in the Twentieth Century". Everywhere I have looked, the Foreign Office has been pretty disastrous. We got the middle east, Africa and India wrong, and if we are not careful we will get China wrong, too. That is partly because the Foreign Office is independent inside Whitehall. If we are to change in the 21st century and hang on to the title of "Great Britain", the Foreign Office will have to grow up and come into the system that exists in this country.

I say that because I have spent a huge part of my life abroad and visited many places. I was a member of the African National Congress. I care enormously about how Britain is perceived abroad. In that respect, I have spoken to our new ambassador in Beijing. As I said in Shanghai, the quality of our people under ambassadorship in China-I will not say that I am deeply distressed about it, because that is the wrong word-needs a fundamental rethink. How can it be right that we have fewer people in the largest country in the world than we do in America? We need to reshape our thinking; we need more consulates in China than in Europe and America. We have said that many times before in this place, but nothing

actually changes.

In that respect, the issue of Copenhagen is interesting. The hon. Member for Banbury asked why we had not picked up the feelers and realised how China felt about Copenhagen. Why did we not do that? Is our regime in Beijing big enough? Is it intelligent enough? Did we not meet the Americans and other Europeans in Beijing to discuss China? Did we never have a discussion in Beijing, with our opposition, about Copenhagen? Where were we? Why was the issue allowed to fester? What has changed? We have not had that debate here. We have not asked how China went to Copenhagen without our having used all the soft diplomacy skills that we are supposed to have. Perhaps the Minister can enlighten us on what happened.

On Tibet, I have written to the Speaker, and I have not yet had an answer, although my letter was sent in October. We fundamentally changed our policy on Tibet, as a result not of a debate or a vote in the House, but of a statement. That is not how a democratic Government go about changing policy: if we want to change policy, we have a debate so that those who do not feel comfortable have a chance to put their feelings on the record. In future, I hope that we will not change policy on any part of foreign affairs as a result of just a statement. I say that irrespective of which party forms the next Government.

We have talked about the economic power that China will enjoy by 2020. I have also said that we are pretty under-represented in our foreign embassies and consulates in China. Now, however, I want to come to the issue that is really gnawing at me following my trip to Tibet. On her first official visit after she was nominated, Hillary Clinton said that she and America were downgrading-she did not quite put it like that, but the meaning was clear-America's resolve on human rights in China. That approach is wrong, but it has washed over the rest of the western world. People are thinking, "Okay. If that's America's attitude because they need the trade, maybe we'll follow suit." That is a very dangerous way to go. As the hon. Gentleman said, we are talking about universal rights, and we should stand up for them. He mentioned Russia, but I could also point out how Poland changed because of one person. These things happen, and we need think only of Solzhenitsyn and his books in Russia. The individual matters, and universal rights are just that-universal.

The issue that concerns me most, however, is Tibet. Lords Steel and Alton have put forward some rather clever ideas about how to cope with Lhasa and the Dalai Lama. If the Dalai Lama dies before the issues of Lhasa and Tibet are resolved, he will die a hero, which will cause even more problems for the Chinese. Italy reached a solution on a similar issue when the Catholic Church was given independence within the state. Lord Alton has proposed that the small part of Lhasa where the two main temples are situated should be the equivalent of the Vatican for the Buddhist faith. I ask the Government to start making representations about resolving the issue, which will fester if we do not resolve it.

We had discussions in Beijing, and I should mention the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Lewis), who he is not here today, although he is absent for good reason. In the Northern Ireland context the Americans always talked to both sides; in the Sri Lankan Tamil context Archbishop Tutu was talking in Dubai; in the Palestinian and Israeli context the Norwegians were talking for nine months, without anyone knowing. There are ways of coming to resolutions. I ask the Minister to ponder whether President Clinton and former Prime Minister Blair could not be asked to go to Beijing to talk through the matter, given the middle east and Northern Ireland peace talks in which they were involved. When I raised that in Beijing, the official view of the Chinese Communist party officials was that it would be a sign of weakness to involve a third party in their problem. I said that it was a sign of maturity in a growing power if it asked an outsider for help. After all, those meetings are held in deep confidence. I said it would be seen as a strength. I think that we are between two positions: China says Tibet is theirs, and we say it is theirs, but that it belongs to the rest of the world too.

The hon. Member for Banbury mentioned Expo 2010. In some ways, hard diplomacy failed in the last part of the 20th century. We need only look at Iraq and Afghanistan to see that. Even if we were to win in Afghanistan, which seems highly unlikely, what have we left, and how much damage has been done in the region? In the same way, America went into Vietnam. Macmillan's advice was by all means to go in, but to remember that we had the same situation in the Sudan; it cost us £1 million a week and in 1920 we gave it back. He saw that that was exactly what would happen in Vietnam. What will happen in Afghanistan? Exactly the same. We will have spent millions of pounds protecting something that, in the end, will go back to what it was. That is the history of Afghanistan.

My point is that in the 21st century hard diplomacy should be secondary to soft diplomacy. What we have not understood about Joseph Nye's work-and I am pleased that the British Council has invited him here next Wednesday for a major lecture; after all, he wrote "Soft Power" in 1994-is that we have astonishingly good soft power people working for us. They are perhaps the best in the world: BBC radio and television overseas, the British Council and the Open university. The British Museum is advising museum staff in Beijing. It is in Shanghai and has a major exhibition there and a major part of our Expo exhibition. The British Council is everywhere. However, we ask both those bodies to do more and more for less and less. We have not produced-but I should love the Foreign Office to publish it-a strategy for soft power in the world. We should build on the three British bodies that I have mentioned, which are outstanding in the world-and we have many others-to create the best diplomacy, which is soft diplomacy.

I want to conclude with a few words about the Chinese Ambassador Madam Fu Ying, who is leaving shortly. I have got to know her incredibly well. She is by some way the best ambassador that China has had in the 12 years I have been in Parliament. I have even taken her to Twickenham; show me a Chinese woman who will say "Yes, I'll come to Twickenham"-but then she went to watch rugby union in Australia, too, when she was there. She understands not just hard power but soft power, and has been outstanding, even if we have had our differences on Tibet and human rights. We shall miss her, and we wish her well. Other hon. Members want to speak, but I want to give the message to the Foreign Office to rethink its overall strategy on China.

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#### EDM 345: HUMAN RIGHTS IN TIBET AND CHINA

03.12.2009, tabled by Hoey, Kate

That this House notes the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's recent statement that there is little evidence that the Government's policy of constructive engagement is leading to any significant human rights improvements in Tibet and China; further notes that the change made in 2008 by the Government to view Tibet henceforth as part of China was made without parliamentary oversight and has failed to lead to the human rights gains in return that were predicted by the Foreign Secretary at the time; recognises that the Government's weakening commitment to the protection of human rights in Tibet in recent years has coincided with a dramatic worsening of the human rights situation in Tibet; and calls on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to conduct a formal inquiry into the effectiveness of strategies being employed by the Government within its overall policy towards China, to protect and promote the human rights of the Tibetan and Chinese people.

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