
China Today – Updates: February 2010

China needs to set its own moral priorities for the future

Source: Global Times

[23:45 February 20 2010]

By Ding Gang

"Being Civilized" is now a catchphrase in China. It is believed by some people that the uncivilized habits of Chinese people will gradually decrease with the economic development. So there is no need to worry.

In fact, that habit had more to do with public sanitation and social etiquette than with the essence of civilization. Moral values are more important than personal habits in determining what constitutes "civilized behavior."

Without "prioritized morality," or the creation and long-time exposure to moral values, it would have been difficult to create the welfare states such as Sweden, where I lived for six years.

Not long ago, I read a report on the welfare models in Western society, categorized by four separate religious denominations.

In the UK, more than half the population belongs to the Church of England; in Northern Europe, about 85 percent of the population follows the teachings of the protestant Lutheran church; in Italy and France, 90 percent and 70 percent respectively is Roman Catholic.

The survey confirms the research findings of many scholars who have studied European social development: The main driving force for social reform comes from moral convictions, mainly love and humanity in traditional Western religions.

The establishment of religion in the Swedish model has important implications. Christianity was introduced to Sweden in 829, and in early 12th century, Sweden's parish system was developed. The introduction of Christianity brought about philanthropy. Many parishes established orphanages and psychiatric hospitals, called "insane asylums" in a less enlightened age.

While the church became a center for the poor, it also played a role in making moral decisions. For example, clergymen could punish the rich who refused to "pay for the poor" and expel them from the church.

More importantly, the Christian concept of "Love thy neighbor" and the spirit of mutual cooperation formed during the Swedish Viking period can easily produce a strong resonance.

There are two major factors behind this change.

First, the development of industrialization caused a large number of rural people to migrate to urban areas, resulting in the widened gap between the rich and the poor. Second, the church's authority had been greatly undermined by secular beliefs.

In 1847 and 1853, the Swedish government twice passed "Poor Laws," dictating, "It is the duty of each parish and city to ensure that every poor person is fed." The church's moral values were adopted by the social welfare framework, which in turn was taken over and expanded by the government.

Interestingly, we can clearly find religious traces in the early active Democratic Socialists. The studies by Swedish scholars show that the Danish text mentioned by Friedrich Engels in the preface to the Communist Manifesto is likely to be of Swedish origin.

While translating the Communist Manifesto, Pehr Götrek changed Communist Manifesto to Voice of Communism. More outrageously, he changed, "Workers of the world, unite!" to "The voice of the people is the voice of God," based on the Latin phrase, Vox populi vox Dei.

According to the analysis by Swedish scholars, Götrek wanted to enhance the propagation effect with religious color. The combination of revolutionary and religious attitudes can be more convincing, as shown by the deep influence of religion in Sweden.

German scholar Franz-Xaver Kaufmann's words may help us understand the relationship between the Swedish translator's changes and the Swedish model.

In the book Herausforderungen Des Sozialstaates, Franz-Xaver Kaufman said, "A state that realized the ideal political community with solidarity of citizens based on freedom and equality of rights and with the aid of market economy and social welfare can only arise in a Western European society that has been deeply affected by Christianity and the Enlightenment culture."

Generally speaking, four factors determine a country's development model: tradition, social structure, political concepts and religious beliefs accepted by the vast majority of people. Among them, the effects of religion are mainly embodied in moral values.

Back to the topic, we can see that although "being civilized" depends on a nation's level of economic development, moral values determine whether a social system that promotes sustainable economic development and social equity can succeed.

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South China Morning Post

Obama meets Dalai Lama in defiance of Beijing's warnings

Kristine Kwok and Reuters in Washington
Feb 19, 2010

US President Barack Obama held talks with the Dalai Lama in the White House yesterday, brushing aside China's warning that the meeting could further damage strained Sino-US ties.

Obama's first presidential meeting with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader was sure to draw complaints from Beijing, which is increasingly at odds with Washington over trade, currencies, US arms sales to Taiwan and mainland internet censorship.

Supporters chanted and waved Tibetan and US flags in snowy Lafayette Square across from the White House to welcome the Dalai Lama, who has met every sitting US president since George H.W. Bush in 1991.

In a delicate arrangement to avoid inflaming ties with Beijing, Obama gave his fellow Nobel Peace Prize recipient little of the ceremonial trappings of a visit to the White House.

The Dalai Lama entered out of sight of journalists and the talks were closed to media coverage. Obama denied him the symbolism of meeting in the Oval Office. Instead they met in the lesser-known Map Room. Such distinctions signalled to Beijing that the Tibetan monk was not being received as a political leader.

Beijing has equated contact with the Dalai Lama, whom it labels a "liar" and "separatist", with support for his "separatist attempts" to seek Tibetan independence. China's rising economic and political prowess has given it more bargaining power to deter international leaders from publicly supporting and meeting the popular religious figurehead.

Beijing publicly denounced the meeting and has warned of possible consequences several times since Obama postponed it from late last year. That postponement was seen as a move to avoid enraging Beijing before Obama's maiden visit to China.

Obama's predecessors, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, also met the Dalai Lama in private and avoided the press. George W. Bush was the first US president to appear in public with the Dalai Lama, when he presented him with a Congressional Gold Medal in 2007.

After a smooth start when Obama took office last year, the US and China are now locking horns on issues ranging from the value of the Chinese currency to Washington's arms sales to Taiwan and internet freedom.

And after repeatedly voicing concern about the sustainability of US deficit spending, Beijing cut its US government bond holdings by US\$34 billion in December, state media reported on Wednesday. With total holdings of US\$755.4 billion, China is no longer the largest foreign holder of US treasury bonds.

Pang Zhongying, an international relations specialist at Renmin University, said Beijing had yet to come up with an effective approach to the bilateral relationship despite its new-found assertiveness.

"Beijing is looking for a new approach to deal with Washington, to settle the issue of [US presidents meeting] the Dalai Lama and arms sales, but it hasn't found one."

Beijing said last month it would, for the first time, impose sanctions on US companies as a protest against Washington's arms sales to Taiwan.

"Beijing does not have tools to impose sanctions," Pang said. "There is no mechanism and no experienced personnel to carry out the sanctions. And if it does impose sanctions, it's going to be embarrassing for Beijing to oppose international sanctions on countries like Iran and North Korea."

Some in the US say the meeting will help Obama push back against an increasingly assertive China.

"There is a real value to the United States on the one hand making very clear that we not only seek to work with the Chinese on bilateral issues and major global issues, but also indicating that long-standing policies are not about to change," said Kenneth Lieberthal, a former Clinton administration official.

Statement of Chinese Embassy in the U.S. on Dalai's visit

CNN - February 23, 2010 -- Updated 2353 GMT (0753 HKT)

What Dalai Lama has said and done in the past decades have fully shown that he is not a pure religious figure, but a political figure in exile who's long engaged in activities to split China and undermine ethnic unity in China under the cover of religion. While claiming that his visits to foreign countries are aimed at spreading religious teachings, he has never stopped defaming the Chinese Government, selling "Tibet independence" proposals and undermining relations between China and other countries. This is well reflected in his remarks during his current visit, including those he made on CNN's Larry King Live.

In addition, the talks between Dalai's private representatives and the Chinese Government at the end of January have demonstrated once again that the Dalai group is still clinging to their separatist propositions, including the so-called "greater Tibet region" and "meaningful autonomy", whose ultimate goal is to separate a quarter of Chinese territory from China. This is something that no sovereign country can allow to occur.

As Dalai Lama claimed on Larry King Live, he regards a foreign country other than China or its Tibetan Autonomous Region as his "home", and Tibet is "not much concern" to him. Such a political figure is in no way qualified to represent the Tibetan people as self-claimed by him.

Tibet has never been a country in history, but an inalienable part of China from ancient times. Dalai Lama's repeated calling Tibet a "country" explains nothing but his true mind of splitting Tibet from China. We urge the U.S. side earnestly abide by the U.S. Government's commitment of recognizing Tibet as part of China and not supporting "Tibet independence", take measures to undo the damages caused by Dalai's visit, stop providing convenience or platform for Dalai and pro-Tibet independence forces, take concret actions to maintain the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations. We sincerely hope American people see through Dalai's true nature as a separatist and his ulterior

motive of sabotaging China-U.S. relations, understand and support China's just positions on Tibet-related issues.

lodges solemn representations over Obama-Dalai Lama meeting

www.chinaview.cn 2010-02-19 13:58:55

BEIJING, Feb. 19 (Xinhua) -- Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai Friday summoned the U.S. Ambassador to China Jon Huntsman and lodged solemn representations over U.S. President Barack Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama.

"The U.S. act grossly interfered in China's internal affairs, gravely hurt the Chinese people's national sentiments and seriously damaged the Sino-U.S. ties, " said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu in a further statement Friday.

In spite of China's strong opposition, U.S. President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met respectively with the Dalai Lama in Washington on Thursday.

"Tibet is an inalienable part of the inviolable territory of China, and the issues concerning Tibet are purely internal affairs of China," Ma said.

China firmly opposes leaders or government officials of any country meeting the Dalai Lama in any form, and also firmly opposes any country or anyone using the Dalai Lama issue to interfere in its internal affairs, he added.

"The Dalai Lama's words and deeds have shown that he is not a pure religious figure, but a political exile who has all along been engaged in separatist activities under the pretext of religion," the spokesman said.

The U.S. side allowed the Dalai Lama to visit the United States and arranged its president and other political leader to meet with him, which grossly violated the basic norms governing the international relations, and ran counter to the principles set forth in the three China-U.S. joint communiques and the China-U.S. joint statement, Ma said.

"It also went against the repeated commitments by the U.S. government that the U.S. recognizes Tibet as part of China and gives no support to 'Tibet independence'", he said, stressing China expressed strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition against such a move.

The determination of the Chinese government and the Chinese people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity is firm and unshakable, and anyone who attempts to use the Dalai Lama issue to interfere in China's internal affairs is doomed to failure, said Ma.

He demanded the U.S. seriously consider China's stance, immediately adopt measures to wipe out the baneful impact and stop conniving and supporting anti-China separatist forces that seek "Tibet

independence."

The U.S. should stop interfering in China's internal affairs and make concrete actions to maintain healthy and steady growth of China-U.S. relations, he said.

Originally named Lhamo Thondup, the Dalai Lama was conferred the title of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940.

After launching and having failed an armed rebellion in March 1950, he fled to India and formed a so-called "Tibet government in exile."

In the guise of religion, the Dalai Lama has since then been involved in activities aimed to separate China and to undermine Tibet's social stability.

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China urges concrete U.S. actions to maintain healthy ties after Obama-Dalai meeting

English.news.cn 2010-02-19 06:03:19

BEIJING, Feb. 19 (Xinhua) -- China urged the United States early Friday morning to take concrete actions for healthy development of bilateral ties after U.S. President Barack Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said in a statement it was regardless of China's repeated solemn representations for the U.S. to obstinately arrange the meeting between Obama and the Dalai Lama.

"The U.S. act grossly violated the norms governing the international relations, and ran counter to the principles set forth in the three China-U.S. joint communiques and the China-U.S. joint statement," he said.

It also went against the repeated commitments by the U.S. government that the U.S. recognizes Tibet as part of China and gives no support to "Tibet independence," he said.

Ma demanded the U.S. seriously consider China's stance, immediately adopt measures to wipe out the baneful impact and stop conniving and supporting anti-China separatist forces that seek "Tibet independence."

The U.S. should stop interfering in China's internal affairs and make concrete actions to maintain healthy and steady growth of China-U.S. relations, he said.

Obama met with the Dalai Lama at the White House Map Room Thursday local time.

South China Morning Post

Dalai Lama's Washington gamble raises questions about his diplomatic strategy

Agence France-Presse in Washington

Feb 17, 2010

The Dalai Lama left Dharamsala yesterday for a closely-watched US trip where he is scheduled to meet US President Barack Obama.

The planned meeting has angered Beijing, but beyond the diplomatic tussle lies a running quandary: Can foreign pressure sway Beijing on Tibet?

Obama is planning to receive the Tibetan spiritual leader at the White House tomorrow, ignoring Beijing's protests.

The National Endowment for Democracy, which is funded by the US Congress, will also present the Dalai Lama with a medal.

Obama avoided meeting the Dalai Lama last year in hopes of starting off his relationship on a good footing with China, which presses other nations to ostracise the internationally respected Buddhist monk.

While the White House said Obama would see him in the Dalai Lama's role as a religious leader, experts believe the exiled Tibetan leadership also has a strategy - to keep attention on Beijing's treatment of the Himalayan region.

"The Chinese are increasingly trying to put pressure on the Dalai Lama to stop these visits so it's obviously something they're concerned about," Robert Barnett, director of Modern Tibetan Studies at Columbia University, said.

"But it's also been very effective for the Tibetan side and also the American agenda in that it does seem to be something that gets the Chinese to the table," he said.

China recently held the first talks in more than a year with envoys of the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet for India in 1959 amid a failed uprising against Chinese rule in his homeland.

But Barnett said: "What it doesn't seem to do is to bring the Chinese into making concessions in the talks. That seems a long way off."

Both sides reported wide gaps in the talks with Beijing renewing charges that the Dalai Lama is a separatist. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly said he is only seeking greater freedoms for Tibetans under Chinese rule.

Elliot Sperling, an expert on Tibet at Indiana University, said that China appeared set on dragging out the periodic talks until the 74-year-old Dalai Lama dies - and with him, Beijing hopes, the Tibetan cause.

"The Dalai Lama and the people around him have refused to realise this and that the talks have a

strategic value for China - they're useful for thwarting criticisms as to why isn't the Chinese government talking to the Dalai Lama," Sperling said.

"China feels that it has all the cards and it doesn't see any reason at all to compromise."

He said that China felt emboldened after protests in Tibet in March 2008 - and foreign criticism of Beijing's handling of them - failed to derail the Beijing Olympic Games later that year.

Instead of seeking meetings with foreign leaders and talks with Beijing, the Dalai Lama may be better off to realise that a solution was unlikely in his lifetime, Sperling said.

"The least he could do would be to preserve the integrity of the movement," Sperling said.

"He has already gone to the length of saying he recognises Tibet as part of China, something a large segment if not the majority of Tibetans do not agree with."

But Barnett said that critics of the Dalai Lama's strategy offered no alternatives.

Politics Daily (AOL News), USA

Behind Obama's Meeting With the Dalai Lama, Valerie Jarrett's Trip to India

Posted: 02/15/10

President Obama's Thursday meeting with the Dalai Lama at the White House was announced just last week, but has been in the works for months. The groundwork was laid last September, when the president quietly dispatched White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett to Dharamsala, India, to personally deliver the invitation.

Navigating relations with the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet -- and the leader of Tibet's struggle for autonomy from China -- involves very delicate diplomacy. The China-U.S. bilateral relationship, while critical to both superpowers, does not keep China from pressuring Obama not to meet with the Dalai Lama. Nor has that pressure kept three former presidents -- George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush -- from meeting with the Dalai Lama anyway, over the objections of the Chinese.

Jarrett's trip to India, where the Dalai Lama has lived since 1959, was timed to come before Obama's November visit to China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. "The president asked me to go and deliver a message to his holiness the Dalai Lama directly in Dharamsala, his home in exile, which I did and at that time invited his Holiness to come to the United States after the president had completed his trip to Asia," Jarrett told me.

We discussed the Dalai Lama during an interview in her West Wing office on Thursday, the day before she traveled to Vancouver as part of the U.S. delegation to the opening of the winter Olympic games. "And His Holiness was very gracious and said he would look forward to coming and this was a day that was mutually convenient for both."

Jarrett was accompanied on her quick trip to India in September by State Department Under Secretary Maria Otero, the Obama White House Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, who was at the time new to her post.

The Nobel Prize-winning Dalai Lama has been in the U.S. twice since Obama has been president, last May and October. Jarrett's September trip served to let the Dalai Lama know Obama would see him, but it could not be on that October visit, because Obama had not yet been to China.

At the time, the National Security Council did not reveal the exact nature of Jarrett's mission. Mike Hammer, the NSC spokesman told me then, "Valerie Jarrett was asked by President Obama to visit Dharamsala to convey his respect for the Dalai Lama as a religious leader and as a representative of the Tibetan culture. Tibetan religion and culture have made significant contributions to the world, and the President wished Ms. Jarrett through her visit to honor them."

"Ms. Jarrett met with the Dalai Lama on September 14. She conveyed the President's respect, and she heard his ideas about how Tibetan identity can be preserved. She also heard of his commitment to dialogue with the Chinese government, and that he does not seek independence for Tibet but rather sees Tibet's future as a part of China. We think his views deserve our attention, and that of the Chinese government."

In September, the Dalai Lama's office --the website is www.dalailama.com -- issued a little-noticed statement about Jarrett's diplomatic debut.

According to the Dalai Lama's office, Jarrett reported that Obama "commends the Dalai Lama for being consistent in looking for a solution based on Tibetan autonomy within the People's Republic of China."

"His Holiness gave an overview of the situation of the Tibetans in exile. He informed Ms. Jarrett of the measures taken by the Tibetans in India to preserve and promote the distinct Tibetan culture and identity through the kind and generous assistance of people and government of India."

In addition, the Dalai Lama, according to his office, "updated Ms. Jarrett on the status of the dialogue process with the Chinese leadership. Ms. Jarrett discussed with His Holiness on the best way the United States could assist in the resolution for the Tibetan issue, particularly in the light of the first visit by President Obama to China in November."

"His Holiness conveyed to Ms. Jarrett the issues that he would like President Obama to take when he visits China. His Holiness also conveyed his strong belief that the United States and China need to have very good and principled relations."

On Feb. 2, White House Deputy Press Secretary Bill Burton was asked during a briefing if Obama would be meeting with the Dalai Lama, despite Chinese warnings. Without revealing the Feb. 18 date, Burton said U.S.-China relations were "mature enough" for Obama to meet with the Dalai Lama.

Burton disclosed on Feb. 2 that Obama "told China's leaders during his trip last year that he would meet with the Dalai Lama, and he intends to do so. The Dalai Lama is an internationally respected religious and cultural leader, and the President will meet with him in that capacity."

"To be clear, the U.S. considers Tibet to be a part of China. We have human rights concerns about the

treatment of Tibetans. We urge the government of China to protect the unique cultural and religious traditions of Tibet. As the President has expressed, we expect that our relationship with China is mature enough where we can work on issues of mutual concern, such as climate, the global economy, and nonproliferation, and discuss frankly and candidly those issues where we disagree. The President is committed to building a positive, comprehensive, and cooperative relationship with China," Burton said.

Jarrett told me the decision to meet with the Dalai Lama was not hard to make since "he is a world leader in culture and religion. Every prior president has met with him and the president is looking forward to meeting him."

In November, she traveled to Asia with Obama and "I have had a couple of meetings with representatives of the Dalai Lama since my return as well as supporters of him who were interested in my experience in Dharamsala, so I've had a few meetings with supporters and his representative."

When asked what the Dalai Lama is like, Jarrett described him as "an extraordinarily hopeful spirit given the last 50 years of his life living in exile. I was very impressed with how, what an optimistic hopeful spirit he is."

Dalai Lama urges Tibetans not to celebrate New Year

Abhishek Madhukar

DHARAMSALA, India

Sun Feb 14, 2010 11:12am EST

DHARAMSALA, India (Reuters) - The Dalai Lama urged Tibetans on Sunday not to celebrate Losar, the Tibetan New Year, just days before his planned meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama which has infuriated China.

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, who greeted thousands of Tibetans in the main Buddhist temple in the north Indian town of Dharamsala at the start of what would otherwise be a two-week Losar celebration, said the gesture was to honor those in Tibet.

"We have heard some voices inside Tibet that they will not celebrate Losar. We should respect and abide by that call," the Dalai Lama said, speaking in Tibetan.

Tibetans who lived in exile had many freedoms that those living in Tibet did not have, the Dalai Lama said, after performing prayer ceremonies and rituals.

This is the second successive year that Tibetans in Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama's headquarters, will not celebrate Losar, which is usually marked with traditional song and dance.

Last year, Tibetans in exile had unanimously called off New Year celebrations in the aftermath of China's crackdown after the March 2008 uprisings in Tibet.

While the Dalai Lama steered clear of any political comments on China or his upcoming trip to Washington, hundreds of Tibetans later signed "I Love Tibet" postcards, wishing Obama "Tashi Delek," the traditional New Year greeting, and expressing their hope that the meeting will result in some concrete action.

China urged the United States on Friday to scrap plans for the long-planned February 18 meeting between Obama and the Dalai Lama, the latest source of friction in already strained Sino-U.S. relations on issues ranging from trade to currencies to U.S. plans to sell weapons to Taiwan.

The Dalai Lama has said he wants a high level of genuine autonomy for his homeland, which he fled in 1959. Beijing regards the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist responsible for fomenting unrest in Tibet.

The United States says it accepts Tibet is a part of China but wants Beijing to sit down with the Dalai Lama to address difference over the region's future.

(Editing by Rina Chandran and Sugita Katyal)

China Urges U.S. to Cancel Obama-Dalai Lama Meeting Next Week

By Hans Nichols and Julianna Goldman

Feb. 12 (Bloomberg) -- China called on the U.S. to cancel a meeting between President Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama next week at the White House, saying it is “firmly” opposed to the event.

The Chinese government has had “stern” exchanges with the U.S. on the matter, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu today said in a statement from Beijing. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs yesterday said the meeting with the Tibetan spiritual leader will take place on Feb. 18.

Obama’s decision may increase friction between the U.S. and China, where government officials have criticized the administration’s plan to hold the session. Zhu Weiqun, a Communist Party official who manages Tibet affairs, said on Feb. 2 that the meeting would “seriously undermine the political foundation of Sino-U.S. relations.”

Tension between the world’s No. 1 and No. 3 economies has risen in the past few months over censorship of Google Inc., climate change and arms sales to Taiwan. Additional strains may hamper global efforts to contain the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs and make China less willing to cooperate on financial matters, such as mitigating the effects of the global credit crisis and letting its currency appreciate.

‘Ferocious’ Reaction

“This will certainly contribute to the downward spiral of two-way relations,” said Willy Lam Wo-Lap, adjunct professor of history at the Chinese University in Hong Kong. “Beijing’s reaction will be ferocious.”

Obama didn’t see the Dalai Lama when the Tibetan leader was in Washington in October, just before the president left for a trip to Asia that included a stop in China. The administration informed Chinese officials of the plan for Obama to see the Dalai Lama.

“We think we have a mature enough relationship with the Chinese that we can agree on issues that are of mutual interest,” while not agreeing on every issue, Gibbs said yesterday at his daily briefing.

At the close of his November meeting with President Hu Jintao in Beijing, Obama said that while Tibet is part of China, the U.S. “supports the early resumption on dialogue between the Chinese government and representatives of the Dalai Lama to resolve any concerns and differences.”

Gibbs said he didn’t know whether press coverage would be allowed when the meeting takes place in the White House Map Room.

Frequent Meetings, Criticism

Every president since George H.W. Bush, who served in office from 1989 to 1993, has sat down with the Dalai Lama, usually in private and frequently prompting criticism from the Chinese government.

In October 2007, President George W. Bush was the first president to meet with the Dalai Lama in a public setting. That October 2007 event took place at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington. The event didn’t set back ties with China, though then-Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao said the gesture “severely hurt the Chinese people’s feelings.”

The U.S.-China political differences coincide with rising conflicts over bilateral trade. The U.S. is China’s biggest trading partner, and China is the second-biggest U.S. trading partner after Canada, with two-way trade totaling \$409.2 billion in 2008. China’s \$266.3 billion trade surplus with the U.S. that year helped spur its purchases of U.S. treasuries.

* To contact the reporter on this story: Hans Nichols in Washington at hnichols2@bloomberg.net; Julianna Goldman in Washington at jgoldman6@bloomberg.net.
Last Updated: February 12, 2010 03:56 EST

China shuts down largest hacker training website

SHANGHAI

Sun Feb 7, 2010 10:41pm EST

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China has closed what it claims to be the largest hacker training website in the country and arrested three of its members, domestic media reported on Monday.

The "Black Hawk Safety Net" website taught hacking techniques and provided malicious software downloads for its 12,000 members in exchange for a fee, the Wuhan Evening News newspaper reported this weekend, citing police in Huanggang, just east of Wuhan.

Hacking from China has received international attention since Google Inc threatened to quit China last month after a serious hacking attempt originating from China, resulting in the theft of its intellectual property.

China has denied involvement in the hacking episode and said it does not condone hacking.

The website was shut in late November and three of its members arrested on suspicion of criminal activity, the newspaper reported, without saying why the news was only released now.

Wuhan happens to be home to the Communication Command Academy, which trains hackers, according to U.S. congressional testimony by cyber expert James Mulvenon in 2008.

The popularity of hacking in China, and hackers' use of multiple addresses and servers, in Taiwan and elsewhere, makes it hard to prove how or by whom they are coordinated.

Would-be hackers in China do not have to look far to figure out how to do it, thanks to a healthy hacking industry and sites such as Black Hawk Safety Net (www.3800hk.com), which was unavailable on Monday.

(Reporting by Melanie Lee; Editing by Lucy Hornby)

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/8497004.stm>

Published: 2010/02/03 17:30:01 GMT

Swiss accept US Uighur detainees

Switzerland has agreed to take two ethnic Uighur Chinese inmates from the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay.

The decision was made for humanitarian reasons, not diplomatic or economic ones, said Swiss Justice Minister Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.

The decision goes against a parliamentary panel's recommendation not to accept the pair.

They were captured in Afghanistan with 20 other Uighurs but not later classified as "enemy combatants".

The Swiss justice minister said the two men did not pose a security risk and should be able to find jobs once they arrived at their new homes in the canton of Jura, in north-west Switzerland.

New homes

China says all of the Guantanamo Uighurs are terrorist suspects and has demanded their return to face justice.

But the US says it cannot repatriate them due to the risk of mistreatment.

Instead, the US has found homes in Albania, Bermuda and the Pacific island nation of Palau for most of the group.

Once the two are settled in Switzerland, which is expected in the next month, five of the Uighurs will be left in Guantanamo.

The Uighurs are a mainly-Muslim, Turkic-speaking minority based in western China's Xinjiang region.

US President Barack Obama has been trying to close the prison, but there are still about 200 detainees there.

Switzerland has taken one other Guantanamo inmate, an Uzbek man.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/8492664.stm>

Published: 2010/02/02 08:10:21 GMT

China police chief stands trial

A former senior police officer is on trial in the Chinese city of Chongqing on charges of corruption, rape and protecting criminal gangs.

Wen Qiang is accused of taking more than 16m yuan (\$2.3m; £1.5m) in bribes to turn a blind eye to crime, Chinese media reported.

He is the most senior official charged under a corruption probe in the city.

The trial comes a day after another police official, Yue Cun, was sentenced to death for corruption.

Mr Wen is appearing in court alongside his wife, Zhou Xiaoya, and three other senior Chongqing police officials, in a trial expected to last four or five days.

Prosecutors say Mr Wen, the former director of the Chongqing Municipal Judicial Bureau, accepted vast sums of money from businesses, officials and criminal gangs in exchange for protection from the law.

When questioned, he had been unable to account for some 10m yuan in assets in his personal possession, the Xinhua news agency reported.

He is also accused of raping a university student on several occasions.

If found guilty, Mr Wen could face the death penalty.

Power ambitions

Mrs Zhou had been charged with abusing her position as the spouse of a government official to illegally obtain some 8.16m yuan, according to Xinhua.

The three other police officials also face charges of bribery and protecting gangs.

The corruption investigation in the southern city began last summer and more than 780 people have been prosecuted.

Mr Wen's sister-in-law, Xie Caiping, was jailed for 18 years in November last year, for crimes including running gambling dens and protecting drug users.

Described as the Godmother of Chongqing, she was reported to have earned more than 2m yuan (\$292,000; £179,000) from crime.

The BBC's Chris Hogg in Shanghai says the crackdown in Chongqing is being seen as an attempt by its party secretary, Bo Xilai, to secure a spot in the governing politburo.

He is considered one of the Communist Party's most popular and charismatic figures, and is clearly keen to show he is strong enough to tackle what seems to be endemic corruption, our correspondent says.

International Federation of Journalists

January 31, 2010

IFJ Report Lists China's Secret Bans on Media Reporting

A new report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on press freedom in China highlights the battle by local censors to control media commentary on a wide range of topics throughout in 2009.

Banned topics range from events associated with social unrest and public protests against authorities, to reports of photos of an actress topless on a Caribbean beach.

The report, *China Clings to Control: Press Freedom in 2009*, was officially released by the IFJ at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong yesterday 31 January.

It presents data gathered by IFJ media rights monitoring in China, detailing the intensifying efforts of authorities since early 2009 to control online content and commentary, and assessing the official restrictions and range of impediments faced by local and foreign media working in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau.

Amid the controversy over Google's recently stated refusal to censor the contents of its Chinese-language search engine, following allegations that China's authorities had authorised a cyber attack on Google's US-based systems, and gmail accounts held by activists in China had been breached, *China Clings to Control: Press Freedom in 2009* presents the wider context of restrictions confronting journalists and media in China.

In calling on China to investigate Google's allegations, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says US companies need to take a "principled stand" against censorship.

"The IFJ fully endorses Mrs Clinton's comments," IFJ General Secretary Aidan White said.

“We further call on the international community to take a principled stand to oppose all forms of restrictions on the rights of journalists to do their work in China, including the steady stream of official bans as well as new rules in 2009 which make it virtually impossible for local journalists who work in traditional or online media to receive the accreditation they need in order to conduct their profession.”

The IFJ report details 62 bans issued from January to November 2009, among hundreds of regulations issued by central and provincial authorities in the past year.

Compiled with the assistance of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), the list below is not complete because of difficulties in obtaining information in China about instructions to the media.

“The IFJ list indicates that much as China’s censors are maintaining a vigilant eye, they are also struggling to maintain a grip on information dissemination,” White said.

* The IFJ report is available in English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese at:
<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/pages/ifj-asia-pacific-reports>

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Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/8489748.stm>

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China 'intensifies' media curbs

China has intensified efforts over the past year to control what the media can say, a report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) says.

It says hundreds of regulations have been introduced since the Beijing Olympics in 2008 to restrict reporters writing on social unrest or scandals.

Journalists were told they could only use the official Xinhua news agency during the 2008 tainted baby milk row.

They were also told not to travel to report on the Sichuan quake in 2008.

Other restrictions included a specific prohibition of topless photographs of actress Zhang Ziyi on a Caribbean beach, according to the IFJ report released in Hong Kong.

It adds that China particularly targeted online media and chatter, often refusing online journalists official accreditation.

Social networking sites organising public protest gatherings have particularly unnerved the Chinese authorities.

Foreign journalists encountered violence and their equipment was destroyed in some cases, according to the report.

But it adds that while the government has had some success in stopping information leaking out about social unrest, it is struggling to stop commentary from reaching the outside world.

China has so far made no public comment on the IFJ report.

South China Morning Post

Beijing to resume talks on Tibet Dalai Lama's envoys in first meeting since riots

Kristine Kwok in Beijing
Jan 26, 2010

Talks between envoys of the Dalai Lama and Beijing will resume at an undisclosed mainland location today after a 15-month halt, the Tibetan government-in-exile said yesterday.

The talks, expected to last for about a week, follow a leadership reshuffle in the Himalayan region and a top-level central government meeting that set out a development blueprint for Tibet and neighbouring Tibetan-populated regions in the coming decade.

The delegation, led by long-time envoys Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen, would arrive on the mainland today, the Dalai Lama's spokesman, Tenzin Taklha, said from Dharamsala, the government-in-exile's seat in India.

Tenzin Taklha refused to reveal the meeting's location but said the delegation was expected to return to India early next month. "It's important that we have to meet face to face with the Chinese to find a mutually agreed solution; in this regard this is definitely a positive step," he said.

In a statement posted on the Dalai Lama's official website yesterday, Chhime Chhoekyapa, the Dalai Lama's secretary, said the delegation finalised preparations for the talks at a two-day meeting and briefed the Tibetan spiritual leader on Friday.

The talks will be the ninth round since dialogue started in 2002. The previous round was held in November 2008.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations said United States President Barack Obama was informed of the resumption of talks before his maiden state visit to China in November. "Obama knew there would be talks in the first three months of the year before he came to Beijing," the insider said.

At a joint press appearance with President Hu Jintao on November 17, Obama called on the central government to resume dialogue.

Beijing's stance towards the Tibetan government-in-exile has hardened since deadly unrest broke out

in spring 2008 in the autonomous region's capital, Lhasa , before spreading to other Tibetan-populated regions.

Beijing has blamed the Dalai Lama for masterminding the unrest despite the Nobel Peace Prize winner's repeated denials.

It insists the Dalai Lama should abandon any "separatist" activity and intentions as a condition of progress in the dialogue. The Dalai Lama says he is only asking for "meaningful autonomy", a softer approach that is now slowly losing support from young Tibetans.

Lian Xiangmin, director of the research office at the central government-backed China Tibetology Research Centre, said yesterday that the only way for future talks to yield progress was for the Dalai Lama to admit that "Tibet has always been part of China".

"So far, he would only say that Tibet has been part of China since 1959, when the PLA took it over. This is suggesting that Tibet wasn't part of China before that," Lian said.

Dr Kerry Brown, a senior fellow with London-based Chatham House, said the meeting would be a step forward but he was not optimistic. "The key thing is they [Beijing] don't want further unrest," he said.

Earlier this month, Beijing said it had convened a Tibet Work Symposium, a high-level meeting that has been held only five times since 1949. Hu said "building Tibet with its own characteristics" would become a priority for the region and Beijing pledged to pump more money into the plateau's development.

South China Morning Post

Beijing trains elite journalists to boost media clout

Raymond Li

Feb 09, 2010

In a bid to raise China's voice on the world stage and compete with Western media, Beijing is planning to assign an elite team of 100 specially trained journalists to the staff of leading state-run media outlets.

Under a programme that began last year, Beijing Foreign Studies University, the capital's Tsinghua University, Communication University of China and Renmin University, and Shanghai's Fudan University have each enrolled about 20 hand-picked postgraduate students in two-year master of journalism courses that will provide talent for the likes of Xinhua news agency, China Central Television and China Daily.

A recruiter at Beijing Foreign Studies University's department of international journalism and communications said the students were the first batch to receive multidisciplinary training specifically aimed at extending the international reach of state-run news outlets. "The Communist Party's Central Committee has required agencies in charge of international communications to work more closely

with the designated schools and, in return, the universities will get extra funding," he said.

Fudan University's journalism school is believed to have persuaded some postgraduate students to alter their fields of study to meet the quota.

As part of a tailor-made curriculum, the university has invited editors from the English-language Shanghai Daily and municipal propaganda officials in charge of international communications to give lectures to the students. The training programme comes on top of a plan to spend between 35 billion yuan (HK\$39.8 billion) and 45 billion yuan to expand state-run news outlets.

Xinhua, which is directly controlled by the party's Publicity Department and is expected to receive a major share of the windfall, launched a TV network last month, taking it a step closer to its ambition of becoming a global media empire to rival the likes of CNN and BBC.

The 24-hour satellite news network, China Xinhua News Network, is running a world news service in Chinese and will introduce an English-language service in July. French, Russian and Spanish channels are also planned, meaning it will have to recruit a significant number of multi-talented journalists.

China Daily, the only national English-language newspaper on the mainland, is planning to launch a US edition, although a staff member said no time frame had been set. It sent its first correspondents to New York and Washington last year.

The paper launched a Hong Kong edition in October 1997, which now has around 30 staff in the city.

In November, Li Changchun, the party chief in charge of ideological affairs, urged state-run media outlets to strive to strengthen their international influence and give China a voice on the world stage.

"To cultivate favourable international media coverage is an urgent and important task for internationally oriented news outlets to help the country's rapid social and economic development, further opening up and raising the country's status," Li said.

Dr Zhang Zhian, of Fudan University's journalism school, said the March 14 riots in Tibet were a major trigger behind the central government's push to expand state-run media organisations - including the journalist training programme - because the authorities were disturbed by what they perceived as biased coverage in Western media.

"The unfriendly coverage in foreign media led [authorities] to discover that China is still insignificant in terms of a voice internationally," Zhang said. "To better tell the world about China, the country needs to train plenty of journalists specialising in international communication."

Hong Kong Baptist University professor Huang Yu said state-run media outlets could make breakthroughs in their international coverage of China's cultural and social transformation. "But fundamentally they can do little to change [their roles as propaganda institutions] because they have to serve the national interest," he said.

Huang said China Daily's planned US edition was a positive move, albeit a mainly political one.

Circulation of the Hong Kong edition was still small, with big institutions the main subscribers, and it was likely to be the same in the United States, he said.

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