

TIBET IS FREE



"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." --Gandhi

Tibet is free.

I make this assertion in consideration of the doctrine of self-determination. 'Self-determination' asserts the right of every distinct people to freely choose who will govern them. It justly confers 'sovereignty' to 'the people'. Following the atrocities of World War Two (with the Jewish Holocaust figuring starkly on the minds of its authors), the United Nations formulated the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". The elaboration of human rights contained within the Universal Declaration was viewed – and is still viewed today – as litmus for a nation's membership into modern global civilization. Due to the international pressure stemming from this now post-modern benchmark of 'membership', the Peoples Republic of China belatedly assented to the human rights doctrine of this 'international club' in 1998; with 'human rights' seeing further insertion into the Chinese Constitution in 2004.

The Declaration articulated that human rights is grounded in human dignity, free self-expression and the individual pursuit of happiness, and that one of the guiding principles to guarantee this freedom is this doctrine of self-determination: that a people have the right to guide their own destiny, elect their own government – that they are the well-spring of ‘sovereignty’, and not any dominant, would-be coloniser-state.

I will point the reader to cited texts that indicate the historical assent given to the principle of self-determination by the early Communist Party under Mao Tsetung and the Kuomintang under Chiang Kaishek in the 1930s, statements by Zhou Enlai, by Hu Yaobang in the 1980s, and most lately by bands of scholars, leading intellectuals and artists following the March 2008 Tibetan Uprising in Greater Tibet and their state’s deadly and manipulative response to the Tibetan people’s cries for a voice. This scholarly and internet based movement towards greater openness, democratic freedoms and inalienable human rights mechanisms in China sees its penultimate manifestation in the forward looking “Charter 08”.

May the ‘words’ of all peoples, and especially those within the Peoples Republic of China, be re-viewed as creative co-participants on the national stage – and not as manifest criminals who “subvert state power”.

Self-determination and the Tibetan issue

Adapted from Kalon T Wandi, <http://tibet.dharmakara.net/TibBull-TibRef4.html>

The great communist leader Vladimir Lenin clearly recognised people's right to self-determination. In his speech to mark the beginning of communist rule in Russia, he said:

"By annexation or seizure of foreign territory, the government understands any incorporation of a small and weak nationality by a large or powerful state....regardless also of how developed or how backward is the nation forcibly attacked or forcibly detained within the frontiers of the (larger) state....If any nation whatsoever is detained by force within the boundaries of a certain state and if (that nation), contrary to its expressed desire-- whether such desire is made manifest in the press, national assembly, party decision, or in protest and uprisings against national oppression-- is not given the right to determine the form of its state life by free voting and completely free from the presence of troops of the annexing or stronger state or without the least pressure, then the adjoining of that nation by the stronger state is annexation, i.e. seizure by force and violence. **No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.**"

The resolution of the Kiangsi Soviet Republic drawn up by Mao Tsetung, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, in 1931, stated: "The Soviet Government of China recognizes the right of self-determination of the national minorities in China, their right to complete separation from China and to the formation of an independent state for each national minority. All Mongolians, Tibetans, ...others living on the territory of China shall enjoy the full right to self-determination i.e. they may either join the Union of Chinese Soviets or secede from it and form their own states as they may prefer."

In a public statement addressed to the Tibetan people in 1959, the President Chiang Kaishek said: "The Kuomintang government has always respected the politics, social system, customs and religion of Tibet. Today, I want to make it clear that once the Communist government that is navigated by foreign powers is driven out and the Tibetan people get to express their desire for freedom, our government will fulfill the Tibetan people's wishes through facilitating self-determination to them."

During a meeting of the Ching Tao minority, the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai, while delivering a speech on "a few points on the minorities' policy," said: "With the knowledge that all the minorities are entitled to certain recognised rights, any minority wishing to form a republic can do so."

While dwelling on the Tibetan issue, he said: "During the Tang Dynasty, the Tibetan government was very powerful and its expansionist sweep reached the northern part of Gongzhou of Sanxi province and even near Chang-an. Not only did the Tibetan army reach the southern part of Gansu, but they also landed near Yunnan and Sichuan."

He clearly said in his statement that, unlike other territories under Chinese rule, "Tibet is mostly occupied by Tibetans only."

During the Second Tibet Work Forum on the Tibetan issue in Beijing from 27 February to 28 March 1984, it is mentioned in its document number six and in 'Collective Issues', an official document of Chinese government, that:

"Tibet is a universally distinct territory of the mainland. It not only differs drastically from the provinces within China's mainland, it is also unlike the people's autonomous regions like Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang."

In a speech by Hu Yaobang, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, during the Second Tibet Work Forum on the Tibetan issue in Beijing, he said:

"Considering the universal distinct features of Tibet as a matter of great importance, it is not only Manchuria and Mongolia which have great historical records. Tibet too has a historical record that is glorious and great."

Although I cannot list each and every feature to illustrate the unique features of Tibet, I think the following few will suffice:

1. Tibet is the roof of the world. Tibet is not only a vast and cold plateau located at high altitude, it is sparsely populated and has an unfavourable transportation scope. On account of these characteristics of Tibet's topography, Tibet remained an isolated country for a long time.
2. Basically, the people of only one nationality inhabit Tibet. They are Tibetans. The Tibetan nationality has lived together as a homogenous unit for a very long period of time. However, being the only nationality in their land, as the Tibetans were, they became very inward looking and did not interact with other nationalities. This meant they neither knew much about others, nor did others know much about them. Therefore, they demonstrate a strong commonality. Speaking about the four major characteristics of a nationality, Stalin pointed out that one of them is the sense of commonality. **Unless you appreciate the sensitivity of a nationality, you cannot earn its friendship since that nationality will not trust you.** Have we seriously studied the sensitivity of the Tibetan nationality?
3. **For many years Tibet's Buddhist religion has left a deep imprint on its people. For several centuries, its polity has been a union of spiritual and secular values. Nowhere in the world is the influence of Buddhism as strong and deep as in Tibet.** The Buddhist influence in Tibet surpasses that in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma. It surpasses even that in Nepal and India where Buddhism was born. The current discipline and life in Tibet's monasteries are almost similar to those in the Middle Ages.
4. **Tibet's unique topography, history, nationality and religion have captured the imagination of a great many people in the world.** It generates huge concerns at international fore. An event of the slightest importance in Tibet is reflected immediately in international fore. While a minor event in Beijing goes unnoticed, the slightest of events in Lhasa and Shigatse generates all kinds of coverage in international media. Moreover, the foreign religious and anti-China forces never tire of interfering in China's affairs.

5. (Not identified by Kalon Wandu)

The above five constitute a minimum number of factors driving home the uniqueness of Tibet. I would like to put together these five factors and stress this perspective: One, **the nature of Tibet's uniqueness is extremely well-pronounced. Its uniqueness is more special than that of any other province, city and autonomous region.** Two, this uniqueness is here to stay for a long time to come" (Hu Yaobang did not foresee his party's future annihilistic policies including significant – and genocidal – demographic transfer of Han Chinese from the interior to Greater Tibet).

In the same meeting, two Chinese leaders, Hu Qili and Tian Jiyuan, are quoted to have commented,

"Historically, Tibet had a huge population. For example, in 1737 Tibet's population was in excess of 8 million."

Therefore, we can observe that both the Chinese Communist and Kuomintang leaders recognised Tibetans as a distinct people.

In 1994 a group of Chinese intellectuals brought out a draft constitution for future China. Article 39 of that draft constitution recognized the special characteristics of Tibet and offered it the right to self-determination. This article reads:

"The position of the Autonomous State of Tibet will be reviewed 25 years after this Constitution is promulgated. The review will be in the form of a referendum by the citizens in the state and not subject to Article 36 of this Constitution."

Leading Chinese Intellectuals Ask China to Rethink Tibet Policy
Adapted from [International Campaign for Tibet](http://www.savetibet.org), March 22nd, 2008,
www.savetibet.org

Leading Chinese intellectuals and writers released a petition today that appeared on several websites in Chinese, entitled "Twelve Suggestions for Dealing with the Tibetan Situation". It is a significant indication that Chinese voices are being raised in China in response to the way Beijing has handled the protests that began on March 10. An English translation is published below.

The letter, demonstrating great courage among its 29 signatories, strongly urges the Chinese government to "stop the violent suppression" in Tibet, and appeals to the Tibetan people likewise not to engage in violent activities. It also urges the Chinese government to end the propaganda and news blockade, saying: "The one-sided propaganda of the official Chinese media is having the effect of stirring up inter-ethnic animosity and aggravating an already tense situation. This is extremely detrimental to the long-term goal of safeguarding national unity."

The signatories include Chinese writers Wang Lixiong, Liu Xiaobo and Yu Jie, Professor Ding Zilin, of the pressure group Tiananmen Mothers, as well as other scholars, and several lawyers and artists.

The petition states that the language used by the Chinese government to describe the Dalai Lama is not "in keeping with the situation, nor is it beneficial to the Chinese government's image. ... As the Chinese government is committed to integrating into the international community, we maintain that it should display a style of governing that conforms to the standards of modern civilization."

The leading intellectuals point out that the demonstrations in the late 1980s which led to the imposition of martial law in March 1989, presided over by China's top leader Hu Jintao, were limited to Lhasa, while the protests of the past 10 days have spread across Tibet. The writers says: "This deterioration indicates that there are serious mistakes in the work that has been done with regard to Tibet. The relevant government departments must conscientiously reflect upon this matter, examine their failures, and fundamentally change the failed nationality policies."

The letter urges dialogue between Chinese leaders and the Dalai Lama, so as to "eliminate animosity and bring about national reconciliation", and appeals for calm and reflection among Chinese people in China.

Twelve Suggestions for Dealing with the Tibetan Situation (petitioned) by Some Chinese Intellectuals

International Campaign for Tibet, March 22nd, 2008, www.savetibet.org

1. At present the one-sided propaganda of the official Chinese media is having the effect of stirring up inter-ethnic animosity and aggravating an already tense situation. This is extremely detrimental to the long-term goal of safeguarding national unity. We call for such propaganda to be stopped.

2. We support the Dalai Lama's appeal for peace, and hope that the ethnic conflict can be dealt with according to the principles of goodwill, peace, and non-violence. We condemn any violent act against innocent people, strongly urge the Chinese government to stop the violent suppression, and appeal to the Tibetan people likewise not to engage in violent activities.

3. The Chinese government claims that "there is sufficient evidence to prove this incident was organized, premeditated, and meticulously orchestrated by the Dalai clique." We hope that the government will show proof of this. In order to change the international community's negative view and distrustful attitude, we also suggest that the government invite the United Nation's Commission on Human Rights to carry out an independent investigation of the evidence, the course of the incident, the number of casualties, etc.

4. In our opinion, such Cultural-Revolution-like language as "the Dalai Lama is a jackal in Buddhist monk's robes and an evil spirit with a human face and the heart of a beast" used by the Chinese Communist Party leadership in the Tibet Autonomous Region is of no help in easing the situation, nor is it beneficial to the Chinese government's image. As the Chinese government is committed to integrating into the international community, we maintain that it should display a style of governing that conforms to the standards of modern civilization.

5. We note that on the very day when the violence erupted in Lhasa (March 14), the leaders of the Tibet Autonomous Region declared that "there is sufficient evidence to prove this incident was organized, premeditated, and meticulously orchestrated by the Dalai clique." This shows that the authorities in Tibet knew in advance that the riot would occur, yet did nothing effective to prevent the incident from happening or escalating. If there was a dereliction of duty, a serious investigation must be carried out to determine this and deal with it

accordingly.

6. If in the end it cannot be proved that this was an organized, premeditated, and meticulously orchestrated event but was instead a "popular revolt" triggered by events, then the authorities should pursue those responsible for inciting the popular revolt and concocting false information to deceive the Central Government and the people; they should also seriously reflect on what can be learned from this event so as to avoid taking the same course in the future.

7. [We strongly demand that the authorities not subject every Tibetan to political investigation or revenge.](#) The trials of those who have been arrested must be carried out according to judicial procedures that are open, just, and transparent so as to ensure that all parties are satisfied.

8. We urge the Chinese government to allow credible national and international media to go into Tibetan areas to conduct independent interviews and news reports. In our view, the current news blockade cannot gain credit with the Chinese people or the international community, and is harmful to the credibility of the Chinese government. If the government grasps the true situation, it need not fear challenges. Only by adopting an open attitude can we turn around the international community's distrust of our government.

9. [We appeal to the Chinese people and overseas Chinese to be calm and tolerant, and to reflect deeply on what is happening. Adopting a posture of aggressive nationalism will only invite antipathy from the international community and harm China's international image.](#)

10. [The disturbances in Tibet in the 1980s were limited to Lhasa, whereas this time they have spread to many Tibetan areas. This deterioration indicates that there are serious mistakes in the work that has been done with regard to Tibet. The relevant government departments must conscientiously reflect upon this matter, examine their failures, and fundamentally change the failed nationality policies.](#)

11. [In order to prevent similar incidents from happening in future, the government must abide by the freedom of religious belief and the freedom of speech explicitly enshrined in the Chinese Constitution, thereby allowing the Tibetan people fully to express their grievances and hopes, and permitting citizens of all nationalities freely to criticize](#)

and make suggestions regarding the government's nationality policies.

12. We hold that we must eliminate animosity and bring about national reconciliation, not continue to increase divisions between nationalities. A country that wishes to avoid the partition of its territory must first avoid divisions among its nationalities. Therefore, we appeal to the leaders of our country to hold direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama. We hope that the Chinese and Tibetan people will do away with the misunderstandings between them, develop their interactions with each other, and achieve unity. Government departments as much as popular organizations and religious figures should make great efforts toward this goal.

Signatures:

Wang Lixiong (Beijing, Writer)

Liu Xiaobo (Beijing, Freelance Writer)

Zhang Zuhua (Beijing, scholar of constitutionalism)

Sha Yexin (Shanghai, writer, Chinese Muslim)

Yu Haocheng (Beijing, jurist)

Ding Zilin (Beijing, professor)

Jiang Peikun (Beijing, professor)

Yu Jie (Beijing, writer)

Sun Wenguang (Shangdong, professor)

Ran Yunfei (Sichuan, editor, Tujia nationality)

Pu Zhiqiang (Beijing, lawyer)

Teng Biao (Beijing, lawyer and scholar)

Liao Yiwu (Sichuan, writer)

Wang Qisheng (Beijing, scholar)

Zhang Xianling (Beijing, engineer)

Xu Jue (Beijing, research fellow)

Li Jun (Gansu, photographer)

Gao Yu (Beijing, journalist)

Wang Debang (Beijing, freelance writer)

Zhao Dagong (Shenzhen, freelance writer)

Jiang Danwen (Shanghai, writer)

Liu Yi (Gansu, painter)

Xu Hui (Beijing, writer)

Wang Tiancheng (Beijing, scholar).

Charter 08

9 December 2008, www.phayul.com

Adapted from Perry Link (translator and introduction), New York Review, 15 January 2009

This document was conceived and written in conscious admiration of the founding of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia where, in January 1977, more than two hundred Czech and Slovak intellectuals formed a loose, informal, and open association of people... united by the will to strive individually and collectively for respect for human and civil rights in our country and throughout the world. The Charter has been signed online by over 5000 mainland Chinese netizens. On December 8 2008, two prominent signers of the Charter, Zhang Zuhua and Liu Xiaobo, were detained by the police. Zhang Zuhua has since been released; as of December 9, Liu Xiabo remains in custody.

The mere signing of this (and the former) document (providing your full name) indicates the courage and determination for change of all signatories to Charter 08. It puts the lie to the Communist Party's insistence that 'democracy' and 'human rights' is a 'western' notion totally foreign to Chinese Confucian culture.

The Chinese document calls not for ameliorative reform of the current political system but for an end to some of its essential features, including one-party rule, and their replacement with a system based on human rights and democracy.

The prominent citizens who have signed the document are from both outside and inside the government, and include not only well-known dissidents and intellectuals, but also middle-level officials and rural leaders. They have chosen December 10, the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as the day on which to express their political ideas and to outline their vision of a constitutional, democratic China. They intend "Charter 08" to serve as a blueprint for fundamental political change in China in the years to come. [The signers of the document will form an informal group, open-ended in size but united by a determination to promote democratization and protection of human rights in China and beyond.](#)

I. Foreword

[" ... In 1998 the Chinese government signed two important international human rights conventions; in 2004 it amended its constitution to include the phrase "respect and protect human rights"; and this year, 2008, it has promised to promote a "national human rights action plan."](#) Unfortunately most of this political progress has extended no further than the paper on which it is written. The political reality, which is plain for anyone to see, is that [China has many laws but no rule of law; it has a constitution but no constitutional government.](#) The ruling elite continue to cling to its authoritarian power and fights off any move toward political change.

[The stultifying results are endemic official corruption, an undermining of the rule of law, weak human rights, decay in public ethics, crony capitalism, growing inequality between the wealthy and the poor, pillage of the natural environment as well as of the human and historical environments, and the exacerbation of a long list of social conflicts, especially, in recent times, a sharpening animosity between officials and ordinary people.](#)

[As these conflicts and crises grow ever more intense, and as the ruling elite continues with impunity to crush and to strip away the rights of citizens to freedom, to property, and to the pursuit of happiness, we see the powerless in our society—the vulnerable groups, the people who have been suppressed and monitored, who have suffered cruelty and even torture, and who have had no adequate avenues for their protests, no courts to hear their pleas—becoming more militant and raising the possibility of a violent conflict of](#)

disastrous proportions. The decline of the current system has reached the point where change is no longer optional.

II. Our Fundamental Principles

This is a historic moment for China, and our future hangs in the balance. In reviewing the political modernization process of the past hundred years or more, we reiterate and endorse basic universal values as follows:

Freedom. **Freedom is at the core of universal human values.** Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom in where to live, and the freedoms to strike, to demonstrate, and to protest, among others, are the forms that freedom takes. Without freedom, China will always remain far from civilized ideals.

Human rights. **Human rights are not bestowed by a state. Every person is born with inherent rights to dignity and freedom. The government exists for the protection of the human rights of its citizens. The exercise of state power must be authorized by the people.** The succession of political disasters in China's recent history is a direct consequence of the ruling regime's disregard for human rights.

Equality. The integrity, dignity, and freedom of every person—regardless of social station, occupation, sex, economic condition, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, or political belief—are the same as those of any other. Principles of equality before the law and equality of social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights must be upheld.

Republicanism. Republicanism, which holds that power should be balanced among different branches of government and competing interests should be served, resembles the traditional Chinese political ideal of "fairness in all under heaven." **It allows different interest groups and social assemblies, and people with a variety of cultures and beliefs, to exercise democratic self-government and to deliberate in order to reach peaceful resolution of public questions on a basis of equal access to government and free and fair competition.**

Democracy. The most fundamental principles of democracy are that **the people are sovereign and the people select their government.** Democracy has these characteristics: (1) Political power begins with the people and the legitimacy of a regime derives from the people. (2) Political power is exercised through choices that the people make. (3) The holders of major official posts in government at all levels are determined through periodic competitive elections. (4) **While honouring the will of the majority, the fundamental dignity, freedom, and human rights of minorities are protected. In short, democracy is a modern means for achieving government truly "of the people, by the people, and for the people."**

Constitutional rule. Constitutional rule is rule through a legal system and legal regulations to implement principles that are spelled out in a constitution. It means protecting the freedom and the rights of citizens, **limiting and defining**

the scope of legitimate government power, and providing the administrative apparatus necessary to serve these ends.

III. What We Advocate

Authoritarianism is in general decline throughout the world; in China, too, the era of emperors and overlords is on the way out. **The time is arriving everywhere for citizens to be masters of states.** For China the path that leads out of our current predicament is to divest ourselves of the authoritarian notion of reliance on an "enlightened overlord" or an "honest official" and to turn instead toward a system of liberties, democracy, and the rule of law, and toward fostering the consciousness of modern citizens who see rights as fundamental and participation as a duty. Accordingly, and in a spirit of this duty as responsible and constructive citizens, we offer the following recommendations on national governance, citizens' rights, and social development:

1. A New Constitution. We should recast our present constitution, rescinding its provisions that contradict the principle that sovereignty resides with the people and turning it into a document that genuinely guarantees human rights, authorizes the exercise of public power, and serves as the legal underpinning of China's democratization. The constitution must be the highest law in the land, beyond violation by any individual, group, or political party.

2. Separation of powers. **We should construct a modern government in which the separation of legislative, judicial, and executive power is guaranteed.** We need an Administrative Law that defines the scope of government responsibility and prevents abuse of administrative power. Government should be responsible to taxpayers. Division of power between provincial governments and the central government should adhere to the principle that central powers are only those specifically granted by the constitution and all other powers belong to the local governments.

3. Legislative democracy. Members of legislative bodies at all levels should be chosen by direct election, and legislative democracy should observe just and impartial principles.

4. An Independent Judiciary. **The rule of law must be above the interests of any particular political party and judges must be independent.** We need to establish a constitutional Supreme Court and institute procedures for constitutional review. As soon as possible, we should abolish all of the Committees on Political and Legal Affairs that now allow Communist Party officials at every level to decide politically-sensitive cases in advance and out of court. We should strictly forbid the use of public offices for private purposes.

5. Public Control of Public Servants. The military should be made answerable

to the national government, not to a political party, and should be made more professional. Military personnel should swear allegiance to the constitution and remain non-partisan. Political party organizations shall be prohibited in the military. All public officials including police should serve as non-partisans, and the current practice of favouring one political party in the hiring of public servants must end.

6. Guarantee of Human Rights. **There shall be strict guarantees of human rights and respect for human dignity.** There should be a Human Rights Committee, responsible to the highest legislative body that will prevent the government from abusing public power in violation of human rights. A democratic and constitutional China especially must guarantee the personal freedom of citizens. **No one shall suffer illegal arrest, detention, arraignment, interrogation, or punishment.** The system of "Re-education through Labour" must be abolished.

7. Election of Public Officials. **There shall be a comprehensive system of democratic elections based on "one person, one vote."** The direct election of administrative heads at the levels of county, city, province, and nation should be systematically implemented. **The rights to hold periodic free elections and to participate in them as a citizen are inalienable.**

8. Rural–Urban Equality. The two-tier household registry system must be abolished. This system favours urban residents and harms rural residents. We should establish instead a system that gives every citizen the same constitutional rights and the same freedom to choose where to live.

9. Freedom to Form Groups. **The right of citizens to form groups must be guaranteed.** The current system for registering nongovernmental groups, which requires a group to be "approved," should be replaced by a system in which a group simply registers itself. The formation of political parties should be governed by the constitution and the laws, which means that we must abolish the special privilege of one party to monopolize power and must guarantee principles of free and fair competition among political parties.

10. Freedom to Assemble. **The constitution provides that peaceful assembly, demonstration, protest, and freedom of expression are fundamental rights of a citizen.** The ruling party and the government must not be permitted to subject these to illegal interference or unconstitutional obstruction.

11. Freedom of Expression. **We should make freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and academic freedom universal, thereby guaranteeing that citizens can be informed and can exercise their right of political supervision.** These freedoms should be upheld by a Press Law that abolishes political restrictions on the press. The provision in the current Criminal Law that refers to "the crime of incitement to subvert state power" must be abolished. **We should end the practice of viewing words as crimes.**

12. Freedom of Religion. We must guarantee freedom of religion and belief and institute a separation of religion and state. **There must be no governmental interference in peaceful religious activities.** We should abolish any laws, regulations, or local rules that limit or suppress the religious freedom of citizens. We should abolish the current system that requires religious groups (and their places of worship) to get official approval in advance and substitute for it a system in which registry is optional and, for those who choose to register, automatic.

13. Civic Education. In our schools we should abolish political curricula and examinations that are designed to indoctrinate students in state ideology and to instil support for the rule of one party. We should replace them with civic education that advances universal values and citizens' rights, fosters civic consciousness, and promotes civic virtues that serve society.

14. Protection of Private Property. We should establish and protect the right to private property and promote an economic system of free and fair markets. We should do away with government monopolies in commerce and industry and guarantee the freedom to start new enterprises. We should establish a Committee on State-Owned Property, reporting to the national legislature that will monitor the transfer of state-owned enterprises to private ownership in a fair, competitive, and orderly manner. We should institute a land reform that promotes private ownership of land, guarantees the right to buy and sell land, and allows the true value of private property to be adequately reflected in the market.

15. Financial and Tax Reform. We should establish a democratically regulated and accountable system of public finance that ensures the protection of taxpayer rights and that operates through legal procedures. We need a system by which public revenues that belong to a certain level of government—central, provincial, county or local—are controlled at that level. We need major tax reform that will abolish any unfair taxes, simplify the tax system, and spread the tax burden fairly. Government officials should not be able to raise taxes, or institute new ones, without public deliberation and the approval of a democratic assembly. We should reform the ownership system in order to encourage competition among a wider variety of market participants.

16. Social Security. We should establish a fair and adequate social security system that covers all citizens and ensures basic access to education, health care, retirement security, and employment.

17. Protection of the Environment. [We need to protect the natural environment and to promote development in a way that is sustainable and responsible to our descendants and to the rest of humanity. This means insisting that the state and its officials at all levels not only do what they must do to achieve these goals, but also accept the supervision and participation of non-governmental organizations.](#)

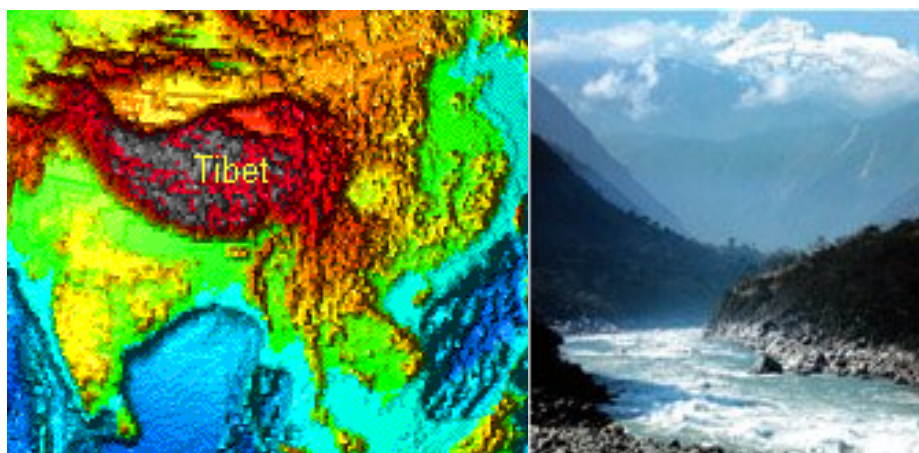
18. A Federated Republic. A democratic China should seek to act as a responsible major power contributing toward peace and development in the Asian Pacific region by approaching others in a spirit of equality and fairness. In Hong Kong and Macao, we should support the freedoms that already exist. With respect to Taiwan, we should declare our commitment to the principles of freedom and democracy and then, negotiating as equals, and ready to compromise, seek a formula for peaceful unification. [We should approach disputes in the national-minority areas of China with an open mind, seeking ways to find a workable framework within which all ethnic and religious groups can flourish. We should aim ultimately at a federation of democratic communities of China.](#)

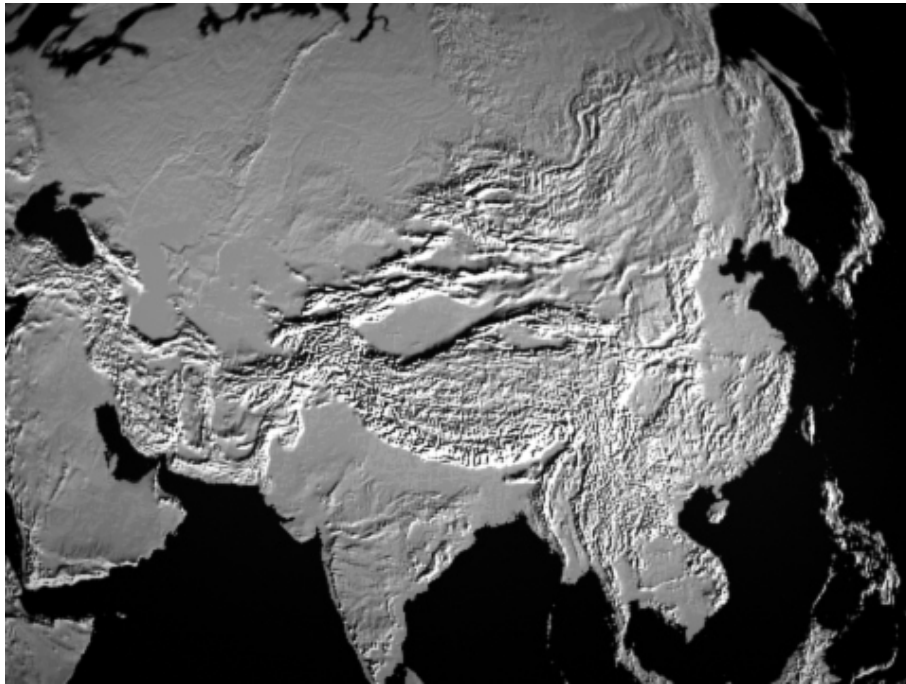
19. Truth in Reconciliation. [We should restore the reputations of all people,](#)

including their family members, who suffered political stigma in the political campaigns of the past or who have been labelled as criminals because of their thought, speech, or faith. The state should pay reparations to these people. All political prisoners and prisoners of conscience must be released. There should be a Truth Investigation Commission charged with finding the facts about past injustices and atrocities, determining responsibility for them, upholding justice, and, on these bases, seeking social reconciliation.

China, as a major nation of the world, as one of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and as a member of the UN Council on Human Rights, should be contributing to peace for humankind and progress toward human rights. Unfortunately, we stand today as the only country among the major nations that remains mired in authoritarian politics. Our political system continues to produce human rights disasters and social crises, thereby not only constricting China's own development but also limiting the progress of all of human civilization. This must change, truly it must. **The democratization of Chinese politics can be put off no longer.**

Accordingly, we dare to put civic spirit into practice by announcing Charter 08. We hope that our fellow citizens who feel a similar sense of crisis, responsibility, and mission, whether they are inside the government or not, and regardless of their social status, will set aside small differences to embrace the broad goals of this citizens' movement. Together we can work for major changes in Chinese society and for the rapid establishment of a free, democratic, and constitutional country. We can bring to reality the goals and ideals that our people have incessantly been seeking for more than a hundred years, and can bring a brilliant new chapter to Chinese civilization.





MAY THE CIVILISING INFLUENCES OF THE MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT ~
INCLUDING THE PRICIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION ~ PREVAIL