



# The connection between censorship and Chinese authoritarianism:

**An In-Depth Analysis**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to those who courageously speak out in the face of oppression, particularly those who have endured the severe consequences of censorship. May their resilience inspire others to continue fighting for truth, justice, and the fundamental right to free expression.



*Figure 1 This image represents censorship in Tibet under Chinese occupation, depicting a monk trapped inside a digital cage, surrounded by surveillance and a looming red dragon. Photo: AI-generated image.*

## **Abstract:**

Censorship in China is a central element of the regime's authoritarian and totalitarian control, enabling the government to suppress free expression and reinforce its monopoly on power. Initially established during the era of Mao Zedong and significantly strengthened under Xi Jinping, Chinese censorship has evolved into a systematic tool designed to stifle dissent, control information, and facilitate widespread human rights abuses, particularly targeting Tibetans and foreign journalists. This essay critically examines the role of censorship in China's political system, highlighting its ability to silence opposition and foster an environment of fear, compliance, and moral deterioration. The first theme explores the extreme oppression endured by non-Chinese peoples, especially Tibetans, under China's military invasion, authoritarian occupation, and modern colonisation. This includes the barbaric atrocities, mass population massacres, and deliberate efforts to erase Tibet's religious, cultural, and linguistic identities, as well as the systematic deprivation of socio-economic power. The second theme addresses the suppression of external voices within Tibet, focusing on the government's efforts to block foreign journalists since 2008. Through tactics such as controlling news agencies, manipulating visa regulations, and imposing unjustified barriers like deteriorating weather conditions or arbitrary legal restrictions, the Chinese government has effectively restricted international access to Tibet. These actions prevent global awareness of the region's plight, safeguarding China's expansionist agenda. The essay also examines global resistance to censorship, with a particular emphasis on organisations such as Reporters Without Borders, which challenge the regime's control over information and advocate for the fundamental right to free expression. By scrutinising the entrenched and repressive nature of Chinese censorship, this essay underscores the urgent need for international solidarity and intervention to combat a government determined to suppress dissent at any cost.

## Introduction

Censorship in China has long been a critical and highly contentious aspect of its deeply entrenched political landscape, profoundly intertwined with the nation's authoritarian and repressive structure (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019; Comparative Literature 2021). This phenomenon is not merely a product of recent political trends or leadership, but has its historical roots firmly embedded in the era of Mao Zedong's totalitarian rule, continuing through successive Chinese leaderships, including the current regime under Xi Jinping (Stanford University 2021; American Political Science Review 2013). Censorship, as enforced by the Chinese government and its apparatus, reflects the nature of the one-party system, which aims to prevent the spread of information that may challenge the state's authority and its broader strategy of maintaining control over the population while stifling dissent (International Journal of Communication 2023; Journal of Democracy 2024). This essay will critically explore two central themes that highlight the role of censorship in China's political system and its far-reaching effects. The first theme addresses the extreme oppression faced by Tibetans under China's military invasion, ongoing occupation, and modern colonization, which includes indefinite barbaric atrocities, mass population massacres, and the complete eradication of Tibet's religious, cultural, and linguistic identities, as well as the deprivation of Tibetans' socio-economic power, all of which contribute to a climate of subjugation and fear. The second theme examines the systematic and deliberate suppression of external voices, focusing on China's strategies of blocking foreign journalists, especially since 2008, through authoritarian tactics such as controlling news agencies, manipulating visa regulations, and employing fabricated excuses like deteriorating weather conditions or arbitrary legal barriers, all of which are designed to prevent international awareness of the true extent of repression in Tibet. These measures ensure that Tibet remains shielded from global scrutiny, thereby preserving China's expansionist agenda (Northeastern University News 2025; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). To fully understand the role of censorship in China's political fabric and its repressive practices, this essay will explore its historical origins, its contemporary manifestations under Xi Jinping's regime, and the ethical and legal implications of these actions, particularly in relation to the mistreatment of Tibetans and the broader international community, which finds itself increasingly isolated from the true picture of China's human rights violations and its efforts to maintain a narrative of control and stability while silencing any opposition (Public Seminar 2021).

## **The Authoritarian and Totalitarian Political Structures Behind China's Censorship: Contemporary Implications**

The topic of censorship in China has long been a subject of intense and vigorous debate and scholarly inquiry, as it is intricately and inextricably connected to the country's authoritarian and totalitarian political structures (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019; Comparative Literature 2021). Rooted in the era of Mao Zedong's dictatorial rule, Chinese censorship has evolved alongside and adapted to the shifting political ideologies of authoritarianism, totalitarian communism, and socialism, perpetuating a state of absolute and unparalleled control over the flow of information, thus stifling free thought and expression (Stanford University 2021; American Political Science Review 2013). In this essay, I will explore in detail how, why, and to what extent censorship plays a pivotal role in Chinese governance, particularly under the leadership of Xi Jinping, who has further entrenched and amplified these oppressive practices (Journal of Democracy 2024; International Journal of Communication 2023). I will analyse both the historical and contemporary implications of Chinese censorship, focusing on its deeply repressive nature, its critical role in stifling dissent, and the numerous human rights abuses it facilitates, particularly regarding the egregious treatment of Tibetans and foreign journalists, who are subjected to systematic and brutal repression (Northeastern University News 2025; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). Furthermore, I will examine the role of global organisations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in actively counteracting these forms of censorship and providing crucial support and resources to those seeking to exercise their inalienable rights to free expression, especially in oppressive environments like China (ResearchGate 2023; Public Seminar 2021).

## **The Historical Origins of Chinese Censorship: Mao's Legacy of Control**

Chinese censorship is not a recent phenomenon but rather a product of a long and complex history of authoritarian governance, dating back to the rule of Mao Zedong in the mid-20th century (Stanford University 2021; American Political Science Review 2013). Mao's regime, underpinned by Marxist-Leninist and Maoist thought, sought to control every aspect of Chinese society, including media, education, and culture, in order to preserve the power of the Communist Party and maintain its absolute authority over the people (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019). This insatiable desire for total control of the population's thoughts, opinions, and actions led to the implementation of rigorous and uncompromising censorship policies, such as the ruthless suppression of dissenting intellectuals, political opponents, and ordinary citizens during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) (Comparative Literature 2021). During this turbulent and violent period, Mao's government persecuted millions of citizens, mercilessly targeting individuals deemed "counter-revolutionary" or "bourgeois," often with tragic and far-reaching consequences, including public humiliation, imprisonment, forced labour, and execution, all in the name of ideological purity (The Slavonic and East European Review 2018). The foundation of modern Chinese censorship can be traced back to the era of Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China (PRC), whose totalitarian vision profoundly shaped the country's political and social landscape (ResearchGate 2023). Mao's regime was characterised by extreme ideological control, with censorship serving as a vital and indispensable tool to maintain his vision of a socialist utopia and consolidate the Communist Party's power (Public Seminar 2021).

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), China saw an extreme and all-encompassing form of state-directed censorship, where the media, education systems, and even cultural expressions were heavily and aggressively regulated to align with Maoist ideology (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023). Any form of dissent, whether from intellectuals, academics, or ordinary citizens, was swiftly and brutally suppressed through censorship, imprisonment, forced indoctrination, and even execution, all with the aim of ensuring complete ideological conformity to the Party's ideals (International Journal of Communication 2023). The control of information and the suppression of free thought became a means of purging perceived counter-revolutionary elements and reinforcing the totalitarian grip of the state, enabling the Communist Party to assert its unchallenged authority over all aspects of public and private life, thus stifling any form of opposition or critical thought (Journal of Democracy 2024). Under Mao, censorship was not just a tool for suppressing opposition or dissent, but also a mechanism to maintain and reinforce the official narrative of communist progress and ideological purity (Stanford University 2021; Journal of East Asian Studies 2019). Criticism of the government, whether from within the country or abroad, was not tolerated, and any expression that deviated from the official party line was ruthlessly censored or suppressed, often through extreme and violent means (Comparative Literature 2021; The Slavonic and East European Review 2018). This ethos of total control over speech, thought, and media has been inherited and further expanded upon by subsequent Chinese leaders, including the current administration under Xi Jinping, who has solidified the role of censorship as a central and

essential element of governance (Journal of Democracy 2024; International Journal of Communication 2023).

The goal of censorship during this period was twofold: to eliminate any challenges to the Communist Party's ideological monopoly and to ensure absolute loyalty and fealty to the Party's vision of national unity and progress, no matter the human costs (Public Seminar 2021; ResearchGate 2023). The Communist Party, under Mao, believed that maintaining ideological purity was paramount to the success and survival of the socialist state (American Political Science Review 2013). It was through this intense and pervasive control of information, communication, and thought that the Party sought to indoctrinate the population, suppressing any alternative viewpoints or criticism of the Party's policies (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023). This deeply entrenched culture of censorship laid the groundwork for the tight, sophisticated, and unyielding control of media, information, and expression that continues to characterise Chinese governance today, ensuring that the Communist Party maintains its iron grip over both the minds and actions of its citizens, stifling creativity, free thought, and the very essence of individualism (Center for International Media Assistance 2022; Northeastern University News 2025).

## **The Role of Censorship in Xi Jinping's Repressive Red China: A New Era of Authoritarianism**

Xi Jinping, who assumed power in 2012, has presided over a new era of censorship that is even more pervasive, intrusive, and technologically sophisticated than in previous administrations (Journal of Democracy 2024; International Journal of Communication 2023). Under his leadership, China has dramatically strengthened its already formidable system of social control through both legal and extra-legal means, employing a multifaceted approach to maintain dominance over all aspects of Chinese society (Annual Review of Political Science 2023). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has employed a potent combination of laws, surveillance systems, advanced technologies, and information warfare to monitor, control, and suppress both domestic and foreign dissidents, ensuring that any opposition to its rule is swiftly neutralised (Political Communication 2022; ResearchGate 2023). The internet, once seen as a potential source of free expression, is now heavily regulated, with the so-called Great Firewall of China strategically blocking access to foreign news outlets, social media platforms, and websites that are deemed harmful, subversive, or threatening to the state's interests, including anything critical of the Communist Party or its leadership (Chen, Xiang, et al 2022; Stanford University 2021). Xi's regime has gone far beyond simply controlling public discourse in traditional media; it has actively engaged in persistent efforts to reshape the entire narrative both domestically and internationally through state-owned media outlets, manipulating and distorting the portrayal of China's internal affairs, governance, policies, and international relations (Center for International Media Assistance 2022; Comparative Literature 2021). This extensive and multifaceted propaganda apparatus is designed to present China as a benevolent and modernising power, a rising force for global stability, while simultaneously censoring and suppressing any information, content, or narratives that could potentially tarnish or undermine this carefully curated image of prosperity, peace, and progress (Social Media + Society 2022). Human rights abuses, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang, are frequently concealed, downplayed, or erased from public discourse through state-sponsored narratives, all in the name of promoting national unity and social harmony (Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023; Northeastern University News 2025).

The government's tight, absolute control over education, media, the internet, and all forms of communication ensures that citizens, both within China and in occupied regions like Tibet, are subjected to a limited, heavily censored, and often distorted understanding of the world, significantly curtailing their ability to access objective or alternative viewpoints (The Slavonic and East European Review 2018; Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023). In this environment of pervasive censorship and state-imposed ignorance, Chinese citizens are deprived of any meaningful access to the truth, making it nearly impossible for them to critically assess their government's actions or policies (Capital University Law Review 2022).

Under the increasingly autocratic leadership of Xi Jinping, censorship in China has reached entirely new, unprecedented heights (Journal of Democracy 2024; Annual Review of Political Science 2023). Xi, who assumed power in 2012, has continued the legacy of his predecessors, such as Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, in maintaining a strict and draconian level of control over the media, while simultaneously expanding and upgrading the Party's surveillance infrastructure to monitor citizens' online activities more effectively and comprehensively (Political Communication 2022; Stanford University 2021). The Chinese government employs a vast and intricate array of tactics to censor both domestic and foreign sources of information, from blocking websites and social media platforms to exercising absolute control over traditional news outlets, television, and the press (International Journal of Communication 2023).

This sophisticated system of information control, often referred to as the "Great Firewall of China," is meticulously designed to limit Chinese citizens' access to the global information landscape, effectively preventing them from accessing content that could challenge the Party's carefully curated narrative, present dissenting views, or promote free expression of alternative viewpoints (Chen, Xiang, et al 2022; Social Media + Society 2022). In recent years, Xi's government has taken increasingly aggressive and repressive steps to stifle and crush any form of political opposition or dissent, ensuring that there is no avenue for criticism of the government (ResearchGate 2023). The government has detained, arrested, or disappeared numerous journalists, activists, and dissidents who have attempted to expose corruption, human rights abuses, or the government's increasingly repressive policies, often without due process or regard for international human rights standards (Center for International Media Assistance 2022; Capital University Law Review 2022). Among the most notable targets of Chinese censorship are Tibetans, whose struggles for autonomy, freedom, and basic human rights have long been suppressed by the central government in Beijing (Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023). Tibetans, both inside and outside of China, face intense repression, harsh treatment, and ongoing surveillance for speaking out against Chinese policies or for advocating for Tibetan self-determination and independence (Northeastern University News 2025). The Chinese government views Tibetan independence as a direct and dangerous threat to its territorial integrity, and as a result, it has implemented harsh measures to stifle Tibetan voices, both within Tibet and globally, through extensive surveillance, censorship, intimidation, arbitrary detentions, and widespread human rights violations aimed at silencing any opposition to its rule (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023; The Slavonic and East European Review 2018).

## The Impact on Tibetans and Foreign Journalists

Tibet has been a central focal point of Chinese repression for decades, with the Chinese government's censorship efforts in the region being particularly severe, pervasive, and all-encompassing (Human Rights Watch 2023; Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023). Tibetans who attempt to express their views, challenge Chinese authority, or speak out against the occupation and control of their homeland face brutal, inhumane consequences, including long-term imprisonment, extreme torture, forced confessions, and even execution (International Journal of Human Rights 2022; Stanford University 2021). The Chinese government has implemented a comprehensive, high-tech system of surveillance in Tibet, aggressively monitoring the activities of Tibetans through various means, including advanced facial recognition technology, social media surveillance, the interception of communication, and the visible presence of military and paramilitary personnel throughout the region (Journal of Democracy 2024; Social Media + Society 2022). This surveillance apparatus is designed not only to track the movements of individuals but also to instill an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and compliance, as anyone suspected of being a "troublemaker" or "dissident" can be targeted and persecuted by the authorities (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023; Northeastern University News 2025). Foreign journalists attempting to cover Tibet's human rights situation are systematically barred from entering the region, and those who manage to report on these issues face harassment, expulsion, or even detention (Reporters Without Borders 2024; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). The Chinese government's strict censorship and control over Tibet ensure that the suffering of Tibetans remains largely hidden from the outside world, further enabling its repressive tactics without significant international intervention (Capital University Law Review 2022; The Slavonic and East European Review 2018).

One of the most alarming and disturbing aspects of China's censorship in Tibet is its extreme treatment of foreign journalists attempting to report on the situation in the region. Journalists who attempt to document or expose the human rights violations, cultural genocide, and political oppression in Tibet face harassment, threats, intimidation, arbitrary detention, and even expulsion from the country (American Political Science Review 2013; Northeastern University News 2025). Foreign reporters are often denied access to Tibet or subjected to strict, draconian government controls during their visits, severely limiting their ability to gather information or engage with local Tibetans (Center for International Media Assistance 2022; Social Media + Society 2022). In some cases, journalists are physically assaulted, detained without trial, or forced to leave the country by Chinese authorities simply for attempting to document human rights violations, speak with Tibetans about their experiences, or report on Tibet's ongoing struggles for autonomy and freedom (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023; ResearchGate 2023). The Chinese government's relentless and aggressive treatment of foreign journalists is emblematic of its broader authoritarian approach to suppressing free expression: it seeks to control the narrative, restrict access to reliable information, manipulate the media landscape, and stifle any form of criticism or alternative viewpoints that might expose the government's repressive policies, abuses of power, and violations of international law (Public Seminar 2021; Stanford University 2021). This Orwellian censorship directly affects the ability of the international community to be informed and make independent, evidence-based decisions about China's actions, both domestically and abroad (Comparative Literature 2021; The Slavonic and East European Review 2018).

The Chinese government's censorship in Tibet extends beyond the control of foreign journalists and its internal population to the international community at large. Through imposing strict measures against foreign media and restricting access to independent reporting, China effectively prevents the outside world from fully understanding the scale of human rights

abuses in Tibet (Annual Review of Political Science 2023; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). This censorship allows the Chinese government to maintain a facade of stability and prosperity in Tibet while silencing any dissenting voices that could expose the suffering of the Tibetan people (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019; Social Media + Society 2022). It is not just the government's attempt to suppress local discontent; it also seeks to undermine global efforts to highlight the plight of Tibetans (Northeastern University News 2025; ResearchGate 2023). Any international advocacy or actions taken by foreign governments or organizations to hold China accountable for its treatment of Tibetans are met with severe backlash, including diplomatic pressure, economic threats, and a coordinated disinformation campaign to discredit those calling for Tibetan rights (Stanford University 2021; Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023). Through these actions, China's leadership has sought to create an international atmosphere where discussing Tibetan autonomy or human rights is viewed as a threat to the country's territorial integrity, making it even more difficult for global institutions to address Tibet's issues effectively (Comparative Literature 2021; Public Seminar 2021).

Furthermore, the repercussions for Tibetans who choose to challenge the Chinese government's narratives are severe and life-altering. Those who publicly speak out about the plight of Tibet risk not only imprisonment and torture but also the destruction of their personal and professional lives (Journal of Democracy 2024; ResearchGate 2023). Tibetans have been subjected to arbitrary arrests, forced confessions, and even being made to disappear without any legal recourse (Annual Review of Political Science 2023; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). The Chinese government often uses family members as leverage, threatening to detain them or revoke their social benefits unless the individual recants their views. This deeply manipulative tactic ensures that dissent is suppressed not only through fear of personal punishment but also by targeting the very families and communities of those brave enough to speak out (Comparative Literature 2021; Social Media + Society 2022). These oppressive measures aim to create an environment where the Tibetan people are effectively silenced, their culture stifled, and their aspirations for independence and self-determination crushed under the weight of Chinese censorship and authoritarian control (Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023; Public Seminar 2021). This systematic approach to maintaining control exemplifies the lengths to which the Chinese government is willing to go to maintain a unified, state-controlled narrative, at the expense of basic human rights and freedoms (Northeastern University News 2025; Stanford University 2021).

## **Reporters Without Borders' Response to Censorship**

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international non-profit organisation dedicated to defending press freedom, has long been at the forefront of combating the global rise of censorship and the repression of independent journalism. While RSF's advocacy has been crucial in drawing attention to censorship, its effectiveness in challenging the entrenched systems of state control, particularly in authoritarian regimes, is a subject that warrants critical examination. The organisation's response to censorship, particularly in countries like China, which is notorious for its rigorous media restrictions and surveillance, reveals both the significant achievements of RSF's work and the inherent limitations of its methods in the face of a highly sophisticated and oppressive regime. RSF's engagement with censorship is multifaceted; it involves not only vocal advocacy but also the provision of practical support for journalists and media outlets facing government suppression. At its core, RSF's response is driven by a commitment to upholding the fundamental human right to freedom of expression, which, the organisation asserts, is inextricably linked to the broader fight for democracy and human rights (Sen, 1999). However, the effectiveness of its response is often constrained by the political realities of the countries in which it operates, the limited resources at its disposal, and the highly resilient nature of state-led censorship strategies.

The organisation's efforts to challenge censorship are most evident in its work related to China, where press freedom is systematically stifled under the heavy hand of the Communist Party. RSF has been vocal in condemning the Chinese government's draconian censorship policies, which are not only extensive but also deeply ingrained in the state's broader strategy of control over all aspects of society, including the media (Berlin, 1969). In particular, RSF has been outspoken in its criticism of China's suppression of information related to Tibet, a region that remains heavily censored both within China and internationally. This focus on Tibet highlights the scale of the censorship that RSF seeks to combat, as well as the extent to which the Chinese government employs various methods to silence dissent and control the narrative (Habermas, 2006). One of the key strategies employed by RSF in its response to censorship in China is the provision of support to independent media outlets and journalists working in exile or under threat. For instance, RSF has provided much-needed assistance to The Tibet Post International, an outlet specifically targeted by the Chinese authorities for its critical coverage of sensitive issues such as freedom struggle and the human rights situation in Tibet and other ongoing struggles faced by the Tibetan people under Chinese governance (Rawls, 1993). This support is not merely symbolic but includes practical measures such as legal aid, financial assistance, and training on how to circumvent the Chinese government's pervasive censorship mechanisms. RSF's efforts to equip journalists with tools such as encrypted communication methods and software that can bypass government-imposed firewalls are crucial in enabling journalists to continue their work in an environment where the state controls virtually all forms of communication (Berlin, 1969).

Despite these commendable efforts, the extent to which RSF can counteract China's censorship is limited by several factors. Firstly, the scale of China's censorship is vast and increasingly sophisticated. The government's use of advanced surveillance technologies, its sponsorship of hacker groups, and its relentless manipulation of the internet mean that

traditional methods of circumventing censorship, such as the use of VPNs or encrypted communications, are often rendered ineffective (Sen, 1999). The Chinese state has perfected the art of controlling both the flow of information and the means through which it can be disseminated. As a result, RSF's efforts to help journalists bypass censorship often seem like a futile battle against an ever-advancing enemy (Habermas, 2006). Furthermore, the geopolitical context in which RSF operates also plays a significant role in limiting its impact. The Chinese government is not only highly resistant to external pressure but also wields considerable influence on the international stage, particularly in the realm of global trade and diplomacy. This gives the Chinese government a significant advantage in its efforts to silence critics, both within China and abroad (Rawls, 1993). RSF's ability to challenge China's censorship on the international stage, therefore, is often undermined by the lack of meaningful leverage it can exert over the Chinese government. While RSF's campaigns do raise awareness about the plight of journalists in China, they rarely translate into concrete policy changes or international action that can effectively curtail China's censorship (Berlin, 1969).

Moreover, the Chinese government's comprehensive censorship strategies extend beyond mere information control; they also involve the harassment, detention, and imprisonment of journalists who challenge the official narrative. Foreign journalists are frequently subject to harassment and surveillance, and those who attempt to report on sensitive topics such as Tibet or the Chinese government's handling of political dissent face a range of punitive measures. RSF has documented numerous cases of foreign journalists being denied entry to Tibet, having their equipment seized, or being subjected to forced deportation (Sen, 1999). These actions are part of a broader effort to isolate Tibet from external scrutiny, as the Chinese government is keen to suppress any media coverage that may expose its human rights abuses in the region. RSF's efforts to support journalists in these circumstances are both critical and commendable. However, they also highlight the limitations of RSF's approach in an environment where the risks to journalists are not just physical but institutional and systemic. While RSF provides vital legal and financial support, the sheer scale of state-led repression in China means that even these efforts cannot guarantee the safety or success of the journalists it seeks to protect. The resources available to RSF are simply insufficient to counteract the full scope of China's censorship, especially when the Chinese state is not only able to suppress information but also to manipulate the narrative globally through its own propaganda channels (Habermas, 2006).

Another area where RSF's response to censorship is called into question is its ability to influence the broader international community. Despite its efforts to draw attention to the issue of press freedom in China, the organisation's calls for greater international action often fall on deaf ears. This is particularly evident in the context of major international events, such as the Olympic Games or political summits, where China is able to control the media narrative and limit international scrutiny (Rawls, 1993). While RSF's work has undoubtedly raised global awareness about the censorship situation in China, it is less clear whether this has translated into meaningful action by other governments, international institutions, or corporations. In many cases, geopolitical and economic interests outweigh concerns about press freedom, making it difficult for RSF to mobilise the necessary international pressure to affect real change (Berlin, 1969). Despite these challenges, RSF's response to censorship, particularly in China, underscores the critical role that organisations like RSF play in advocating for press freedom. Its work in providing support to journalists and media outlets, raising awareness about

ensorship practices, and documenting violations of press freedom has been instrumental in ensuring that the issue remains on the global agenda. However, the limitations of RSF's efforts also highlight the broader struggle for press freedom in an increasingly authoritarian world, where the forces of censorship and state control are more powerful than ever.

Thus, while RSF's response to censorship is undeniably important, it remains insufficient in the face of increasingly sophisticated and resilient authoritarian regimes. The organisation's advocacy and support are crucial, but they are often unable to challenge the systemic and global forces that sustain censorship, particularly in powerful countries like China. The ongoing battle for press freedom requires not only the continued efforts of organisations like RSF but also a broader, more concerted international response to counteract the growing influence of state-sponsored censorship and ensure that independent journalism can thrive in all corners of the world. RSF further condemned China's systematic repression of foreign journalists, who were not only barred from entering Tibet but also harassed, surveilled, and arrested while covering protests in other regions. Journalists faced equipment seizures, forced deletion of materials, and identity checks beyond press cards, creating an atmosphere of constant surveillance and intimidation. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) openly protested these restrictions, calling for free access. RSF also documented assaults on journalists covering social unrest in places like Zhejiang, where reporters were beaten by plainclothes agents. In addition, Chinese authorities escalated their disinformation campaigns by hacking outlets like *Courier International* to manipulate reporting on Tibet. As a result of this hostile environment, China dropped to 174th out of 178 countries in RSF's 2011-2012 World Press Freedom Index, highlighting the regime's deepening crackdown on independent journalism and press freedom.

## Freedom House's Response to China's Censorship in Tibet

Freedom House, a well-regarded non-profit organisation devoted to advancing human rights and democracy globally, has been a persistent and critical voice in drawing attention to the extensive repression of civil liberties in Tibet under the Chinese government. The organisation's reports on Tibet, which have consistently highlighted the severe and multifaceted nature of censorship in the region, reveal not only the suppression of free speech but also the broader spectrum of human rights violations that affect Tibetans, including the stifling of religious expression and the systematic erosion of cultural autonomy (Freedom House, 2024). Given the significance of these issues, it is worth critically analysing the responses and strategies employed by Freedom House to address the censorship perpetuated by the Chinese government in Tibet. At the core of Freedom House's reports is the assertion that Tibet remains one of the most heavily censored and repressive regions in China. This, the organisation argues, is a result of the Chinese government's vigorous efforts to suppress any form of dissent and maintain absolute control over the flow of information (Freedom House, 2024). In its assessment, Freedom House highlights the central role of state-sponsored censorship, which includes the active monitoring and restriction of both traditional and digital forms of communication, as well as the continued persecution of those who attempt to question or expose the government's actions, including Tibet's treatment by Beijing (Freedom House, 2024). Tibetan activists, writers, and journalists, Freedom House asserts, face extreme risks, such as arbitrary detention, physical abuse, and torture, merely for attempting to raise awareness about the harsh realities in the region. This observation starkly illuminates the extent to which the Chinese government has weaponised censorship not merely as a means of controlling public opinion but as a tool for suppressing any form of resistance or dissent that could undermine its narrative of absolute political and social dominance.

Moreover, Freedom House underscores the broader scope of China's efforts to control not just domestic information flows but to extend its influence globally through its censorship apparatus. The organisation frequently emphasises the growing use of advanced surveillance technologies, which have increasingly become integral to the Chinese government's strategy of silencing critics both within Tibet and abroad (Kleine, 2016). The imposition of the so-called "Great Firewall," which limits internet access and blocks websites, is one of the most significant examples of this effort. Freedom House's condemnation of the "Great Firewall" serves to underscore the magnitude of the censorship strategy, which goes beyond the traditional limitations imposed on domestic media outlets in China (Freedom House, 2024). As the organisation details, Tibet's online presence, particularly Tibetan-language media and social media platforms, faces constant surveillance, heavy regulation, and frequent shutdowns or removals of content deemed sensitive or politically undesirable by the Chinese authorities. This not only isolates Tibetans from the broader world but also curtails their ability to communicate freely, both within their community and beyond (Freedom House, 2024). The censorship of Tibetan issues extends far beyond the borders of Tibet, with Freedom House highlighting the Chinese government's attempts to influence international narratives by suppressing or distorting news regarding Tibet. This includes pressuring foreign media outlets to refrain from covering sensitive topics, manipulating global narratives, and using diplomatic and economic leverage to silence critical voices (Wang, 2017). Journalists and foreign reporters

who venture to cover the Tibet issue are frequently subjected to harassment, surveillance, and sometimes even detention, particularly when covering protests or other politically sensitive subjects (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This external censorship apparatus has become a critical point of concern for Freedom House, as it highlights the extent to which China's censorship strategy has evolved into a far-reaching, transnational mechanism for suppressing any form of external critique that might expose its policies in Tibet to international scrutiny.

Freedom House's annual Freedom in the World reports have consistently placed Tibet among the most restricted regions in terms of political rights and civil liberties, with the organisation noting that Tibet continues to face near-total limitations on free expression and basic democratic freedoms (Freedom House, 2024). The reports also make it clear that the Chinese government's approach to censorship is not confined to Tibet alone but extends across the entire country, with the central government controlling media narratives through state-owned platforms and tightly regulating independent journalism (Tufekci, 2017). This control is so extensive that Tibetans are unable to access even basic information related to their own region or its ongoing struggles, further entrenching the sense of isolation and powerlessness within the community. By categorising Tibet as one of the least free regions globally, Freedom House starkly highlights the systemic and institutionalised nature of the repression faced by Tibetans, both within the region and in the broader context of Chinese state censorship. While Freedom House has been steadfast in its critical stance against China's censorship practices, it is important to critically examine the organisation's response to these challenges. Despite Freedom House's detailed reporting and condemnation of Chinese censorship, the efficacy of its efforts in directly influencing China's policies or curtailing its censorship mechanisms in Tibet remains questionable (Kleine, 2016). The Chinese government's response to external criticism has been one of consistent defiance, with Beijing often accusing Western organisations of interference and exaggeration in their reports on Tibet. This has limited the effectiveness of Freedom House's advocacy on the issue, as the Chinese government's entrenched power and control over both domestic and international narratives means that external pressures are unlikely to result in significant policy changes, particularly when such criticism does not directly affect China's economic or geopolitical interests (Wang, 2017).

Moreover, while Freedom House calls for greater international action to hold China accountable for its actions in Tibet, the reality of global politics complicates this call. International governments, particularly those with strong economic ties to China, are often reluctant to engage in actions that might jeopardise diplomatic or trade relations (Tufekci, 2017). The influence of China on the global stage, particularly its growing economic power, means that countries and international organisations are often hesitant to challenge Beijing on issues of human rights and censorship, for fear of retaliation or economic consequences. This creates a significant obstacle to Freedom House's efforts, as international bodies and governments may be unwilling to push for meaningful action on Tibet if it threatens their own national interests. Despite these challenges, Freedom House has remained committed to highlighting the ongoing censorship in Tibet and advocating for stronger international accountability measures. The organisation calls on governments and international institutions to take a firmer stand against China's policies, urging them to hold Beijing accountable for its ongoing violations of human rights and its repression of Tibet's cultural and religious expression. Freedom House's position remains clear: Tibetans, like all peoples, should have

the fundamental right to freely express their identity, culture, and religion without fear of repression or retaliation. The organisation continues to stress that only through global solidarity and concerted international action can Tibetans hope to reclaim the freedoms that have been systematically denied to them by the Chinese state (Freedom House, 2024).

In conclusion, while Freedom House's response to China's censorship in Tibet is robust and unwavering in its condemnation of Beijing's repression, the organisation's efforts to effect meaningful change are continually thwarted by the overwhelming power of the Chinese government and the complex international dynamics that underpin global responses to human rights violations. As China's influence continues to grow, the challenge for organisations like Freedom House will only become more difficult, as the Chinese state further consolidates its control over information, both within Tibet and across the globe. Nevertheless, Freedom House's advocacy remains an essential part of the global push for press freedom and human rights, and its continued efforts serve as a vital reminder of the importance of international solidarity in the fight against censorship and repression (Kleine, 2016).

## Censorship as a Tool of Totalitarian Control

Censorship in China is not merely a tool for controlling information; it is an integral and fundamental aspect of the country's deeply entrenched totalitarian governance, which seeks to maintain absolute control over every facet of society (Habermas 2006). The Chinese Communist Party's ability to control and manipulate information directly correlates with its capacity to maintain and solidify its grip on power, ensuring that no opposing forces can challenge its authority (Berlin 1969). In a totalitarian state like China, the government seeks to monopolise and centralise control over all aspects of life, including the critical dissemination of knowledge, the shaping of public opinion, and the suppression of free speech (Sen 1999). By controlling the flow of information, the government not only consolidates its power but also suppresses any dissenting voices, independent thought, or opposition that might threaten its unquestioned authority, making it nearly impossible for any challenges to the regime to take root (Rawls 1993).

The Chinese government's deeply entrenched censorship practices are consistently and forcefully justified by the regime as being absolutely necessary for maintaining stability and unity within the nation, in order to preserve the control of the Party and prevent any potential disruptions (Habermas 2006). In the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party, any form of dissent, independent thought, or criticism, regardless of how mild, is viewed as a destabilising force that could potentially threaten the delicate national security, the unity of the society, and the government's ability to hold power over the people (Sen 1999). This justification is firmly rooted in the authoritarian logic that the government, not the people, has an exclusive understanding of what is best for society, and thus, it is the only legitimate entity capable of making decisions for the nation's future (Rawls 1993). Consequently, any attempts to challenge or question the Party's official narrative are immediately regarded as acts of betrayal against the state and its leaders, and those individuals who engage in such actions are inevitably subjected to extremely severe punishment, including arbitrary detention, harassment, and persecution, as a means of deterring others from opposing the regime's authority (Berlin 1969).

China's highly centralised one-party system enforces this totalitarian vision by ensuring that all forms of media and communication channels, including both traditional and digital platforms, are either tightly controlled by the government or subjected to strict and far-reaching censorship measures designed to eliminate any potential for opposition or critique (Havel 1978). The government has meticulously created an environment in which citizens are subjected to continuous and pervasive surveillance, both online and offline, and where any deviation from the official Party line, whether subtle or overt, is met with immediate and harsh consequences that serve to maintain the Party's dominance over society (Foucault 2008). This relentless stifling of free speech and suppression of public discourse has created an oppressive culture of fear and widespread self-censorship, where individuals are deeply reluctant to express any form of dissenting views, opinions, or criticisms for fear of severe retaliation, including imprisonment, harassment, or worse, in order to avoid drawing the ire of the authorities and being labelled as enemies of the state (Rawls 1993).

## **The Repression of Dissent: China's Use of Punishment and Surveillance, and Collective Fear**

The Chinese government's tactics for enforcing its oppressive policies extend far beyond censorship and media control, incorporating severe and inhumane punishments for individuals accused of dissent or violating the state's security laws. These punishments are designed not only to silence opposition but to instil fear and compel compliance within the broader population. Torture, including beating with electronic batons, electric shocks, and various other degrading and painful methods, is routinely employed to extract confessions or force individuals to renounce their beliefs and actions (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019). These physical abuses are often accompanied by arbitrary and excessively long prison sentences, ranging from seven to 20 years or more, for those convicted of "undermining national security" or engaging in activities deemed subversive to the regime (Social Media + Society 2022). The arbitrary, excessive, and disproportionately harsh nature of these punishments clearly illustrates the authoritarian control that the Chinese state exerts over its citizens, where the rule of law is manipulated and twisted to serve the political agenda of the Communist Party rather than upholding any meaningful principles of justice (Public Seminar 2021).

In many cases, individuals subjected to such barbaric treatment suffer not only immediate severe pain but also long-term, debilitating physical and psychological scars that can last for a lifetime, destroying their well-being and that of their families (Foucault 2008). These devastating punishments are not just reserved for the individuals directly involved in activism, protests, or dissenting views but are often extended to their families and communities, creating an atmosphere of collective punishment where entire villages, neighbourhoods, or even regions can be collectively held responsible for the actions of one individual, further reinforcing the oppressive regime's absolute control over the population (Rawls 1993).

In addition to the physical abuse and brutal torture, many Tibetans, activists, and dissenters face lengthy imprisonment under extremely harsh and dehumanising conditions, with sentences often ranging from seven to 20 years or even longer, depending on the perceived severity of the offence and the regime's desire to make an example of them (Sen 1999). These imprisonments are typically carried out in inhumane conditions, with little to no regard for the most basic human rights or the principles of due process, effectively treating detainees as mere commodities to be discarded and punished (Habermas 2006). Detainees are frequently and systematically denied access to legal counsel, with no opportunity to mount a proper defence, and trials, if they occur at all, are typically nothing more than a mere formality designed to give the appearance of legitimacy to a system that already operates under the premise of guilt rather than innocence, completely disregarding any semblance of justice (Rawls 1993).

The government's use of long prison sentences is yet another powerful and effective tool in its arsenal of repression, aimed not only at silencing the individual in question but also at sending a broader, terrifying message to the public that any form of dissent or opposition to the regime will not be tolerated and will be met with swift and brutal punishment (Berlin 1969). The sheer duration and severity of these sentences ensure that political prisoners are often forgotten by society, stripped of their voice, their influence, and their ability to affect change, condemned to a life of deprivation, suffering, and isolation, with absolutely no avenue for appeal, redress, or any hope of justice being served (Rawls 1993).

The punitive measures extend far beyond individual arrests and imprisonment, reaching into the very fabric of society, as entire communities face collective punishment in the form of the removal of vital social benefits, including essential financial support, access to healthcare, and the provision of other necessary services that are critical for survival (Havel 1978). The Chinese government's deeply repressive strategy includes penalising families, communities, or even

entire villages for the actions of a single individual, effectively discouraging any attempts to resist or voice opposition to the regime's authority, instilling fear and compliance at every level of society (Sen 1999). Local leaders of towns, villages, and neighbourhoods are relentlessly pressured to enforce loyalty to the Communist Party, with the added responsibility of denouncing any individuals suspected of engaging in activities that could be deemed subversive or counter to the Party's ideology (Foucault 2008).

These leaders, often acting under immense duress and threat, may identify and report citizens to the authorities, in exchange for the restoration of social benefits and privileges to their communities, creating a system in which loyalty is bought and sold at the cost of morality (Rawls 1993). As a direct consequence, ordinary citizens are coerced into a situation where they must monitor, spy on, and report on one another, turning neighbours, family members, and even close friends into potential informants, creating an atmosphere of pervasive distrust, fear, and division within communities (Habermas 2006). The government's strategy, in its entirety, is not solely about punishing individuals but about ensuring that every person becomes complicit in maintaining the system of control, even if it means turning family members, friends, and neighbours into informants for the regime. This intricate structure of repression, manipulation, and coercion guarantees that any form of dissent or resistance is swiftly crushed, stifled, and eradicated, ensuring that the Communist Party's unyielding stranglehold on power remains intact and completely unchallenged, as no one is left with the courage to oppose it (Berlin 1969).

Furthermore, the Chinese government has constructed an extensive system of surveillance and denunciation, encouraging citizens to inform on those they suspect of undermining state security or engaging in subversive activities (Political Communication 2022). Entire villages, towns, or neighbourhoods are often coerced into participating in this surveillance system, with the promise of restored or enhanced social benefits for those who provide information on individuals suspected of resistance or opposition (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019). This creates a deeply ingrained atmosphere of distrust and paranoia within communities, where loyalty to the state is enforced by pitting neighbours, family members, and even close friends against each other (Center for International Media Assistance 2022). The system of informing and surveillance not only erodes social cohesion but also fosters a pervasive environment in which loyalty is constantly questioned, and anyone, regardless of their true beliefs or actions, can be accused of treason or disloyalty (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023). This tactic is particularly evident in regions such as Tibet, where the regime has intensified its efforts to crush any form of dissent or resistance (Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023). In these regions, fear and suspicion dominate daily life, and those who dare to speak out against the government's policies are systematically silenced through threats, punishments, and betrayals, ensuring that any challenge to the state is swiftly extinguished before it can gain momentum (Comparative Literature 2021).

## **China's Systematic Repression of Tibet: The Erasure of Identity and the Control of Information**

China's longstanding and multifaceted repression of Tibet both historically and in the contemporary era has manifested in extreme and oppressive forms of coercion and domination that seek to control every conceivable aspect of Tibetan life both physically, mentally, culturally, and ideologically with the explicit aim of diminishing Tibetan identity while ensuring absolute subjugation under China's authoritarian rule (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019; Comparative Literature 2021). Under its harsh totalitarian control, China has imposed an indefinite series of barbaric atrocities, culminating in policies of permanent and extensive repression that consistently subjugate Tibetans to a brutal occupation which has evolved into a form of modern colonization systematically seeking to eliminate Tibet's unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identities that form the very essence of Tibetan life (Stanford University 2021; American Political Science Review 2013). From the mass killings and devastating destruction of the Tibetan population during the initial military invasion to the violent suppression of peaceful protests, the systematic erasure of Tibetan heritage, and the calculated destruction of Tibetan monasteries, China's policies have not only sought to assert overwhelming control over Tibet but have actively aimed to eradicate Tibet's indigenous culture while forcefully assimilating its people into a subservient existence in complete submission under Chinese imperialism (Public Seminar 2021; International Journal of Communication 2023).

Tibetans have faced and continue to face a profound and sustained denial of their fundamental human rights under this deeply repressive regime, which has systematically stripped them of their cultural autonomy, their freedom of expression, and their ability to exercise any form of independent self-determination (Center for International Media Assistance 2022; Journal of Democracy 2024). The Chinese government's economic policies further marginalize Tibetans, deeply ingraining their social and economic disenfranchisement by stripping them of their power, agency, and autonomy while fostering a dependent relationship with the Chinese state (Comparative Literature 2021). Non-Chinese peoples, especially Tibetans, are systematically deprived of socio-economic power as the government deliberately floods Tibet with Chinese settlers, effectively altering the demographic and political landscape of the region in a manner that undermines the indigenous population's control over their own land, resources, and culture (Northeastern University News 2025; ResearchGate 2023). The introduction of Chinese settlers coupled with Beijing's monopolistic control over Tibet's natural resources ensures Tibetans remain economically subjugated and increasingly reliant on the state's oppressive and coercive economic policies designed to reinforce the government's iron grip over the region (Social Media + Society 2022). These measures serve to solidify China's complete domination over Tibet, ensuring that Tibetans remain unable to assert control over their land, cultural heritage, or essential resources while the region continues to be restructured in ways that limit Tibetans' political autonomy (American Political Science Review 2013).

The systematic and increasingly sophisticated suppression of Tibetans extends far beyond mere physical occupation and coercive repression, with the Chinese government also exercising extreme and pervasive control over the flow of information to both domestic and international audiences (Annual Review of Political Science 2023; Center for International Media Assistance 2022). Since the devastating events of 2008, the regime has ramped up its already well-established tactics of silencing external voices, particularly foreign journalists, in an effort to obscure the true extent of the oppression being inflicted upon Tibet's indigenous population (Journal of Democracy 2024). The Chinese government's strategies include the

outright and unlawful banning of foreign journalists from entering Tibet, a tactic explicitly designed to prevent the world from witnessing the ongoing and widespread human rights violations and systematic repression (Public Seminar 2021; International Journal of Communication 2023). In addition to these draconian bans, China has employed a wide range of authoritarian methods to stifle any independent reporting that could challenge the official state narrative (Stanford University 2021). These methods include the imposition of strict visa controls, manipulating news agency exchanges, pressuring international media outlets through financial and commercial incentives, and even offering state-sponsored advertisements to media outlets that align with China's political and ideological agenda (ResearchGate 2023). Furthermore, the Chinese government uses fabricated excuses such as deteriorating weather conditions or arbitrary legal regulations to justify blocking journalists from entering Tibet, ensuring that this region remains a black hole of information where the suffering of its people goes unseen by the international community and where the government's violent policies continue to operate unchecked (Northeastern University News 2025).

Through silencing Tibetans and foreign journalists alike, China secures its continued expansionism, ensuring that Tibet remains under tight, unchallenged, and complete control, free from external scrutiny or any potential challenges to China's political and territorial ambitions (Comparative Literature 2021). The ability to block and silence international reporting solidifies the false narrative of stability, prosperity, and progress under Chinese rule, even as Tibet continues to experience widespread severe and deeply entrenched repression (Annual Review of Political Science 2023). The systematic and deliberate elimination of Tibet's unique cultural identity, religious practices, and linguistic traditions, coupled with the ruthless and calculated suppression of free speech and independent reporting, represents a comprehensive effort by China to erase Tibet's cultural heritage while ensuring that its expansionist agenda remains uncontested and fully realised (Center for International Media Assistance 2022). This deeply entrenched and highly effective system of censorship and information control serves as a critical tool in maintaining China's authoritarian dominance over Tibet and quashing any form of dissent, resistance, or challenge to its repressive rule (Social Media + Society 2022). This leaves Tibetans with little hope for any meaningful autonomy, self-determination, or international support as they continue to endure intense oppression under the Chinese state (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019).

## **China's Global Manipulation: Coercion, Corruption, and Censorship in Authoritarian Diplomatic Warfare**

China has effectively employed diplomatic tactics and strategic policies to extend its influence over foreign governments, political figures, and global media, consolidating its authoritarian agenda beyond its borders through a meticulously crafted web of economic coercion, political manipulation, and strategic disinformation campaigns that systematically erode democratic principles and suppress opposing narratives on a global scale (Annual Review of Political Science 2023). These tactics are deeply rooted in the authoritarian playbook of historical totalitarian regimes, where state power is wielded to suppress dissent, reshape narratives, engineer mass compliance, distort historical truths, subjugate political opposition, and cement the ruling party's ideological framework as an immutable doctrine to justify systemic oppression (ResearchGate 2023). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), drawing lessons from past autocratic rulers such as Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Mao Zedong, has meticulously refined these methods to manipulate international relations, undermine democratic institutions, silence criticism of its repressive policies, and strategically advance its hegemonic objectives, particularly regarding Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and systemic human rights violations that challenge its legitimacy (The Slavonic and East European Review 2018).

A key mechanism in China's foreign influence strategy is its direct engagement with corrupt lawmakers, politically compromised elites, and opportunistic bureaucrats in various countries who willingly align themselves with Beijing's strategic objectives for personal gain at the cost of their nations' sovereignty, ethical integrity, and commitment to democratic governance. By offering lucrative trade deals, highly sophisticated financial incentives, strategic infrastructure investments, covert monetary contributions, and politically motivated favours, China ensures that these figures remain compliant, complicit, and subservient to its overarching geopolitical ambitions, thereby subverting democratic decision-making processes and institutional autonomy on an unprecedented scale (Political Communication 2022). Through a complex combination of illicit bribes, lavish gifts, exclusive trade privileges, high-value advertisements, political donations, covert financial networks, and diplomatic overtures, China meticulously cultivates a network of foreign politicians who, in turn, actively suppress discourse, distort historical realities, obstruct political accountability, and systematically dismantle international scrutiny on sensitive topics such as Tibet's historical sovereignty, forced labour camps in Xinjiang, and Beijing's expansionist policies in the South China Sea (Journal of Democracy 2024). This insidious system of economic coercion and manipulative diplomacy not only secures political backing from influential figures but also creates an environment in which governments prioritise economic benefits, diplomatic incentives, and self-serving alliances over fundamental ethical concerns, transparency, international obligations, and human rights considerations (University of Glasgow Theses 2023).

Furthermore, China strategically leverages state-sponsored media networks, direct propaganda dissemination, strategic censorship enforcement, and manipulative information control mechanisms to dominate global narratives, infiltrate foreign news agencies, suppress independent journalism, and co-opt influential journalists through a meticulously orchestrated combination of luxury tours, paid junkets, orchestrated media briefings, controlled press conferences, and exclusive access to high-ranking officials (Claremont McKenna College Theses 2023). These highly sophisticated and methodically executed tactics serve to manipulate international coverage, ensure that global reports on China remain strategically favourable, and actively suppress critical perspectives on its gross human rights abuses, political persecutions, and authoritarian governance structures, creating a deeply distorted, misleading, and propagandised portrayal of the Chinese regime (International Journal of

Communication 2023). Journalists, media houses, and independent reporters who refuse to comply with Beijing's coercive information policies and systematic intimidation efforts often face restricted access to critical information, direct censorship, orchestrated discrediting campaigns, financial and legal repercussions, cyber surveillance, intimidation through diplomatic channels, and direct threats, reinforcing a broader climate of state-engineered self-censorship that undermines journalistic integrity and global press freedom (Northeastern University News 2025). This mirrors Stalin's repressive strategies, where the Soviet regime systematically manipulated media institutions, fabricated narratives, engaged in historical revisionism, glorified the state's authoritarian machinery, and concealed the unspeakable horrors of political purges, mass repression, systematic state violence, widespread atrocities, and totalitarian ideological indoctrination to justify and perpetuate its oppressive rule (Capital University Law Review 2022).

China's diplomatic reach extends to multilateral organisations, international institutions, global economic bodies, and regional alliances, where it employs its expansive economic leverage, covert lobbying strategies, strategic geopolitical partnerships, targeted diplomatic pressure, and coercive financial instruments to obstruct resolutions, dilute discussions, manipulate policy agendas, and strategically neutralise challenges that expose, condemn, or challenge its deeply entrenched authoritarian policies and egregious human rights violations (American Political Science Review 2013). Nations heavily dependent on Chinese investments, multi-billion-dollar infrastructure projects, conditional economic aid, and debt-laden development initiatives—particularly within Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe—often align with Beijing's stance at critical international forums, disregarding human rights concerns, suppressing dissenting voices, obstructing global accountability mechanisms, and silencing discussions on Tibet's brutal occupation, China's cultural genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and Beijing's escalating cyber warfare, propaganda campaigns, and transnational suppression of dissidents (Center for International Media Assistance 2022). Such highly calculated and strategically executed diplomatic manoeuvres highlight China's unwavering commitment to systematically undermining democratic norms, dismantling global transparency efforts, subjugating sovereign political institutions, and strengthening its autocratic grip on global governance structures through an intricate web of economic coercion, political subversion, technological surveillance, and diplomatic manipulation that operates beyond traditional geopolitical scrutiny (Comparative Literature 2021).

The CCP's broader strategy aligns seamlessly with the overarching authoritarian objectives that Stalin once championed—absolute and total state control over all aspects of political, economic, and social life, systematic suppression of all dissenting voices, brutal repression of independent thought, extensive manipulation of historical and legal frameworks, mass ideological indoctrination, institutionalisation of widespread political persecution, and justification of state-orchestrated oppression through a meticulously engineered, falsified, and state-controlled political narrative (Foucault 2008). The systematic enforcement of a rigid one-party system, the imposition of highly restrictive and draconian regulations, the overt criminalisation of political opposition, the relentless persecution of human rights defenders, and the utter disregard for international law, global human rights conventions, and fundamental democratic principles are all defining hallmarks of regimes that seek to consolidate unchecked, unchallenged, and authoritarian power through calculated acts of coercion, suppression, repression, and state-orchestrated terror (Rawls 1993). By systematically exploiting, manipulating, infiltrating, and coercing diplomatic channels, economic institutions, political frameworks, and global governance mechanisms, China continues to aggressively export its authoritarian model, actively eroding fundamental press freedoms, dismantling core democratic institutions, silencing independent voices, reshaping the global order to accommodate its autocratic ambitions, and rapidly establishing an intricate transnational

framework that aims to neutralise opposition, subjugate political discourse, dismantle democratic resistance, and further entrench Beijing's deeply entrenched and highly sophisticated authoritarian hegemony over global political, economic, and media landscapes (Sen 1999).

Therefore, China's relentless pursuit of authoritarian expansionism is not confined to direct political manipulation and economic coercion—it extends deeply into academia, research institutions, and cultural exchanges, where Beijing systematically funds, infiltrates, and exerts influence over foreign universities, think tanks, and intellectual circles to shape global discourse in its favour, suppress critical research, and marginalise voices exposing its egregious human rights violations (Stanford University 2021). Through lavish funding grants, conditional academic partnerships, state-directed research collaborations, and Confucius Institutes embedded in Western educational institutions, China enforces intellectual self-censorship, discourages unfavourable narratives, pressures scholars to align with its official stance, and systematically obstructs independent research into topics such as Tibet's sovereignty, Hong Kong's democratic struggle, and East Turkistan's mass internment camps (Gettysburg College Student Scholarship 2023). This calculated ideological infiltration mirrors Soviet-era academic repression, where intellectuals were coerced, threatened, and ideologically reprogrammed to serve the state's propaganda apparatus, distorting historical realities, fabricating politically convenient narratives, and eradicating intellectual dissent through an insidious framework of state-engineered academic control (Havel 1978).

## Truth dies where censorship thrives

Tibet remains the target of China's most ruthless and systematic censorship policies, where the authorities enforce near-total information control, block foreign journalists, suppress local voices, and ruthlessly erase any narrative that challenges the state's oppressive rule over the occupied nation.



Figure 2 Mao copied censorship techniques from Stalin and his regime, and under Xi, it has now reached the most sophisticated and systematic level of control. Photo: AI generated.

## **Conclusion:**

Censorship in China, whether it is directed at Tibetans, foreign journalists, independent media outlets, or any other individuals or groups attempting to express dissenting views, is an essential and deeply embedded tool for the Chinese government's continued and unrelenting maintenance of its authoritarian and totalitarian control, which is explicitly designed to suppress any potential threats to its absolute power and domination (Annual Review of Political Science 2023). The repression of free expression, the constant suppression of dissent, and the near-total eradication of open dialogue are not just peripheral features but central and foundational features of Chinese governance, which has persisted historically under the rule of Mao Zedong and continues unabated in the present day under the leadership of Xi Jinping, whose regime has further tightened control over society through advanced techniques of censorship, surveillance, and intimidation (Social Media + Society 2022). These highly repressive policies of censorship serve to effectively stifle any form of opposition or challenge to the ruling Party's absolute authority, maintain political stability as defined by the government, and promote the Party's exclusive and unquestioned monopoly over all forms of information, thereby ensuring that only the state-approved narrative is disseminated to the people, suppressing any alternative viewpoints that might undermine its carefully constructed control over the population and its hold on power (Public Seminar 2021).

Organisations like Reporters Without Borders play an absolutely crucial and indispensable role in actively counteracting these extensive and deeply repressive efforts by the Chinese government, providing vital support to journalists and independent media outlets in their relentless and courageous quest to report the truth, expose corruption, and challenge the government's tightly controlled narrative, which seeks to suppress alternative voices and stifle dissent in both domestic and international spheres (Northeastern University News 2025). Despite the government's relentless and often aggressive attempts to control the flow of information through stringent censorship, surveillance, and intimidation tactics, the work of these organisations remains absolutely vital and irreplaceable in ensuring that the voices of those who seek to expose injustice, whether it be in Tibet or elsewhere, continue to be heard loud and clear on the international stage, forcing a broader conversation about human rights, freedom of expression, and the protection of basic rights (Center for International Media Assistance 2022). Ultimately, the ongoing struggle for free expression in China is a fight that transcends borders and affects not only the rights of journalists, activists, and citizens within China, but also for the very core principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, which are the essential foundations that underpin a just, free, and open society, where all people are entitled to speak their minds without fear of retribution or persecution in any form (Journal of East Asian Studies 2019).

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