
**THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Tibet, China, and the United States:

Reflections on the Tibet Question

Occasional Paper

BY MELVYN C. GOLDSTEIN

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

OF THE UNITED STATES

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Foreword

Ethnic and sectarian conflicts throughout the world have emerged in the post-Cold War world as perhaps the most dangerous and durable threats to peace, prosperity, stability, democratic institutions and human rights. Recognizing these dangers, the Atlantic Council of the United States launched a policy project in 1993 on "Individual Rights, Group Rights, National Sovereignty and International Law." An interdisciplinary Working Group composed of experts on ethnic questions, practitioners in conflict resolution, regional specialists and policy-makers was formed under the leadership of Ambassador Max Kampelman.

The objectives of the policy project are practical: to identify U.S. interests in specific conflicts and potential conflicts; and to identify appropriate methodologies and techniques, as well as multilateral and bilateral instruments that might be used to mitigate ethnic tensions before they become violent.

The current work program is composed of three components: five case studies, the policy paper and a seminar for emerging leaders. Working papers by specialists have been commissioned — and the majority have now been published — on "International Law and Self-Determination;" "Hungarian Minorities in East-Central Europe;" "Ukraine, Ukrainian Minorities, and United States Policy;" "International Implications of the Civil War in Tajikistan and United States Policy;" and "Tibet, China, and the United States: Reflections on the Tibet Question." The case studies are reviewed by the Working Group, and appropriate experts on the topic are invited to join the Working Group's discussion. A rapporteur has been appointed to draft a policy paper, and, after thorough review by the Working Group, the policy paper will be published in 1995 as a Working Group report; it will be addressed to the U.S. administration and Congress and appropriate international institutions with recommendations to be initiated and implemented to mitigate or resolve conflicts.

A selection of the working papers served as the focus of discussion for a Young Leaders Seminar held in Romania in October 1994. This seminar was the 22nd Young Leaders Seminar since the Council initiated the program in 1981.

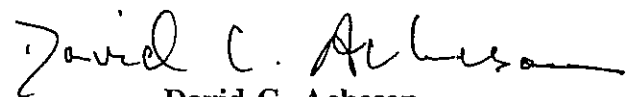
Tibet was selected as a component of this project because of the nature of the challenge and its importance to U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The future of Tibet is admittedly a controversial complex of issues. When the Atlantic Council and the National Committee on United States-China

Relations published a policy paper in February 1993, the report commented, "Beijing's human rights practices have become powerful issues in the United States, as well as in many other Western nations. Tibet, for instance, has been a recurring point of friction in Sino-American relations, with the Chinese crackdown in 1987 only one pre-Tiananmen example."

Tibetan-PRC relations today are tense and unpredictable. The question appears to be not whether violence will erupt again, but when — unless there are major efforts aimed at conciliation by the leadership of both parties. At the same time, Tibet remains a point of friction between the United States and the PRC, and Tibet-PRC relations are hotly disputed in the United States. Those who champion Tibetan human rights and self-determination disagree over tactics with those who favor policies pursuing human rights within a broader context of the overall U.S. strategic relationship with the PRC. Almost any statement assessing and recommending changes in Tibet-PRC relations is likely to be perceived and denounced as unbalanced. Is it possible to encourage a reasoned dialogue in pursuit of a pragmatic, viable compromise?

Dr. Melvyn Goldstein, a distinguished professor of anthropology at Case Western Reserve University and a longtime analyst of Tibet, the PRC, and their relations, has attempted to do so in this Atlantic Council Occasional Paper. Given the passions and emotions attached to Tibetan issues, it is unlikely everyone will agree with everything he says. Yet his thoughtful suggestions describing a pragmatic, middle way to avoid violent confrontation and preserve Tibetan culture certainly deserve careful consideration by all parties, including the U.S. policymakers. As he notes, the United States "appears clearly to have a major, albeit negative, strategic interest in Tibet — namely, preventing the conflict from turning violent."

On behalf of the Atlantic Council, it is a pleasant duty to thank The Pew Charitable Trusts for their forward-looking support of this project on ethnic and sectarian conflict. In accordance with our practice, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Atlantic Council or The Pew Charitable Trusts.



David C. Acheson
President

The Atlantic Council of the United States

Executive Summary

The "Tibet Question" — the political status of Tibet *vis-a-vis* China — is an intractable nationalistic conflict that has become a volatile component of Sino-American relations and a contentious issue in the American political arena. It is also a conflict that appears to have reached a critical juncture in its long history. This essay explores the nature of this conflict, examining its historical background and explicating recent developments with the aim of informing policy.

The roots of the conflict can be traced back hundreds of years, but in modern times the Tibet Question entered the international arena at the turn of the 19th century when British attempts to open relations with Tibet culminated in the 1903 to 1904 invasion and conquest of Lhasa. The Qing Dynasty, which considered Tibet politically subordinate, countered this perceived threat to its hegemony by taking measures to increase its control over Tibet's administration. These actions ended in 1911 when the Qing Dynasty was overthrown in China. Tibetans then expelled all Chinese troops and officials and the 13th Dalai Lama triumphantly returned from exile in India, immediately issuing a proclamation that is considered by many Tibetans to be a declaration of independence.

From 1911 to 1951, Tibet functioned as a defacto independent nation, conducting all governmental functions without interference from China or any other country. Nevertheless, its international status was ambivalent since China claimed Tibet as part of its state and the relevant Western countries like Britain and the United States refused to recognize Tibetan independence. The current dispute over the political status of Tibet is to no small extent an artifact of the Western democracies' decision throughout this period to publicly acknowledge Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, even though Beijing had no direct influence there.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 quickly ended Tibet's defacto independence. The Communists, like the Nationalists of Chiang Kaishek, claimed Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, and invaded Tibet's eastern province in October 1950 to force the Tibetan government to commence negotiations to accept such a status. They quickly vanquished the Tibetan forces, and when neither the Western democracies, India, nor the United Nations (UN) responded positively to Tibet's pleas for help, the 14th Dalai Lama sent a negotiating team to Beijing. It signed the 17 Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in May of 1951. This agreement recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet for the first time in Tibetan history, but also recognized the right of the Dalai Lama's

government to continue to administer Tibet, at least until the Tibetan people and leaders wanted reforms.

This agreement, however, proved difficult to operationalize, and after an eight-year period of coexistence, a Tibetan uprising occurred in Lhasa in 1959. The Dalai Lama then fled to exile in India, followed by about 80,000 Tibetans. China now set aside the agreement and established a people's government in Tibet. The Dalai Lama, in India, similarly denounced the agreement, claiming Tibet's right to self-determination and independence. The political status of Tibet *vis-a-vis* China reemerged as a contested issue.

During the two decades after the 1959 uprising, China ended the feudal estate system in Tibet and gradually implemented a system of pervasive communes. It also destroyed the vast monastic system and, during the Cultural Revolution, vigorously attacked traditional Tibetan culture and prohibited all religious activities.

During the same period, the exiles criticized Chinese actions in Tibet and made their case for self-determination and independence. They won sympathy and some support in the West, but were unable to exert any influence on Chinese policies in Tibet. Negotiations between China and the Dalai Lama to resolve the conflict, moreover, did not occur during this period.

Sino-Tibetan relations entered a new phase in 1978 when China embarked on a more liberal policy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Beijing shifted its Tibet policy away from the assimilationist/class struggle policy of the Cultural Revolution, instituting in its place a policy that emphasized meeting the ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans while improving their economic situation. At the same time, Beijing and the Tibetan exiles began secret talks to resolve their dispute. The Dalai Lama formally sent negotiating delegations to Beijing in 1982 and 1984.

These talks, however, proved fruitless. The Chinese were unwilling to consider real political autonomy in Tibet, i.e., a political system different than the rest of China and run by Tibetans. Conversely, the exiles were unwilling to accept a solution that addressed only cultural, religious and linguistic issues and did not give them political control over Tibet. Complicating the situation was the exile's demand for creation of a "Greater Tibet" that would include not only political

Tibet (the Tibet Autonomous Region) but also the ethnic Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces.

This failure left the Dalai Lama and his leaders in a difficult position politically. On the one hand, they did not have the means to compel Beijing to accede to their demands, while on the other, they saw China moving ahead with its internal reform program without them. In 1986 to 1987, therefore, the exiles countered by launching a new strategic initiative whose aim was to secure increased political support from the United States and Europe in order to exert new and effective leverage on China.

A key element in this new strategy was that the Dalai Lama for the first time would make political speeches in the West. In September 1987, he initiated this strategy in Washington, D.C. with a major speech before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The following June, he made another important address at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In the latter speech he laid out publicly for the first time his willingness to accept something less than independence for Tibet, namely, complete political autonomy.

Several days after the Dalai Lama's speech in Washington, a small group of monks in Lhasa demonstrated in support of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. They were arrested without incident, but a few days later when more monks demonstrated to demand the release of the first monks, a full-scale riot erupted. During the succeeding two years, three other riots occurred in Lhasa, the last compelling Beijing to declare martial law in Tibet for one year.

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama's initiative achieved considerable success internationally and in the United States. The U.S. Congress passed legislation supporting Tibet, the Dalai Lama and his envoys gained access to top leaders in the United States, and in 1989 the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

China's Tibet policy was now in shambles.

Beijing reacted predictably by shifting to a more hard-line strategy. This policy developed new and effective security measures to prevent further political demonstrations from turning into riots, and is accelerating a program of rapid economic development that is increasing Tibet's integration with the rest of China and, over time, is hoped to create more "modern" Tibetans who will be less

influenced by religion and lamas. The economic strategy, however, pulled in large numbers of Chinese entrepreneurs and laborers to Tibet to work, increasing the size of the non-Tibetan population in Tibet. Beijing's refusal to reverse this influx is the core issue creating the current crisis.

As a result of this new Chinese strategy in Tibet, the Dalai Lama again finds himself relegated to the sidelines watching events unfold that from his point of view are tragic. For well over a thousand years of recorded history, through wars and conquest, famines and other natural disasters, Tibet remained the exclusive home of a people. Now Tibetans in Tibet and in exile see this being lost right under their eyes and are unable to stop it. Beijing, therefore, has, in a sense, turned the tables on Dharamsala, and the triumphs won by the Dalai Lama's international campaign look more and more like pyrrhic victories. The international initiative won significant symbolic gains for the exiles in the West but did not compel China to yield to its demands and played a major role in precipitating the new hard-line policy that is changing the nature of Tibet. Ironically, by threatening China's political hold over Tibet, Dharamsala and its Western supporters provided the advocates of a hard-line Tibet policy the leverage they needed to shift Beijing's Tibet policy away from the more ethnically sensitive one of the early 1980s.

How is this conflict likely to play out in the coming years? Is there any common ground upon which reconciliation between the Dalai Lama and China can be constructed? Does the United States have a role to play?

China — Beijing now has little interest in holding discussions with the Dalai Lama because it feels he is still unwilling to accept rapprochement without political power, and, in any case, feels its rapid modernization policy is working well.

The Tibetan exiles — The situation in the exile community also is not conducive for a negotiated resolution to the current impasse. The Dalai Lama and his top officials are anxious to stop the influx of non-Tibetans into Tibet, and they hold deep convictions that Tibet should be a predominantly Tibetan area whether independent or part of China. However, the fundamental impasse is the same as it was in the early 1980s — China is unwilling to give the Dalai Lama real political autonomy, and the Dalai Lama is unwilling to accept less than that. What is new, however, is China's current Tibet policy. It is exerting tremendous pressure on the Dalai Lama and his leaders

either to quickly resolve the conflict or to develop effective counter-measures that will prevent the influx of non-Tibetans from changing the ethnic character of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama and his officials appear to have three — not mutually exclusive — main options:

1. *to maintain the status quo by continuing the current campaign to enhance their international support* — The Dalai Lama and his officials appear to understand the current limitations of Western support, and do not expect the West to force China out of Tibet. Consequently, implicit in this strategy is the hope that the flow of history will provide them the victory they desire but cannot attain on their own. Ideally, they hope that China will soon disintegrate like the Qing Dynasty did in 1911 (and the U.S.S.R. more recently), and that this will afford them the opportunity to regain control over Tibet. But even if this does not occur, they hope that the supreme leader who replaces Deng Xiaoping will be more sympathetic to giving Tibetans real political autonomy. Thus, while waiting for history to solve their dilemma in a satisfactory manner, they are trying to induce Western nations to renounce their acceptance of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and to pressure China to make concessions.

2. *to escalate by encouraging (or organizing) violent opposition in Tibet* — Such a campaign of violence would seek to disrupt Beijing's hard-line policy and prevent China from pursuing business as usual in Tibet. Its goal would be to persuade China to adopt a more conciliatory line, not militarily drive it from Tibet. However, if China began to disintegrate in the coming years, this strategy would be used to try to wrest actual control.

This option would be difficult for the Dalai Lama to accept even tacitly given his commitment to non-violence, but may begin even without his sanction.

3. *to compromise by sending Beijing a clear message that the Dalai Lama is ready to scale down his political demands in order to preserve an ethnically homogeneous Tibetan homeland* — A

compromise for less than real political autonomy will be difficult for the Dalai Lama to accept. However, it might occur if the leadership change in Beijing brings no significant shift in Beijing's attitude toward Tibet and the Dalai Lama concludes as a result of this that a major compromise is the only way to preserve an ethnically homogeneous Tibetan homeland.

The United States — U.S. policy toward Tibet has vacillated over the past 45 years, but at present is based on the assumption that the U.S. has no vital strategic interests in Tibet. The executive branch and State Department are pursuing a policy that seeks to avoid allowing the Tibet issue to create unnecessary complications and irritants in U.S. relations with China. It appears willing to urge both parties to resolve the conflict peacefully, to occasionally mention human rights violations in Tibet, and perhaps to privately encourage China to meet with the Dalai Lama for a new round of talks, but no more.

As currently defined, U.S. interests in the area are satisfied if the Sino-Tibetan conflict continues at its present level, i.e., if it does not degenerate into serious violence. However, if a shift to violence occurs, this would likely impact U.S. strategic interests negatively:

1. *if it remained localized in Tibet* — Serious violence would likely result in a heavy-handed Chinese response that would create powerful pressures in the U.S. domestic political arena for America to support Tibetans' "struggle for freedom." Any such steps, of course, would be perceived in Beijing as a threat to Chinese core strategic interests and would worsen the already fragile relations between China and the United States, potentially complicating the United States' entire Asia policy.

2. *if it spilled outside of Tibet* — Serious violence could impact on the internal stability of China itself. It might, for example, precipitate a chain of events that would destabilize China at this very important juncture in its history. Or it might significantly exacerbate forces of disintegration that started elsewhere in China. One of Beijing's worst case scenarios, in fact, is for serious disturbances in Tibet to spread to other minority areas such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and the Muslim (Hui) areas in Gansu.

But is a descent into serious violence a reasonable assumption? Unfortunately, the answer appears to be affirmative. Tibetans are unlikely to stand on the sidelines for much longer watching Beijing transform the demography and economy of their homeland with impunity. Nationalistic emotions coupled with desperation and anger make a powerful brew, and there are Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet who are intoxicated with the idea of beginning such a campaign of focused violence — in their view a "war of conscience," a Tibetan-style intifada.

Moreover, given that the exiles and their supporters in the West and in Tibet see Soviet-like disintegration in China as their greatest hope, they are likely to leap in with alacrity at any sign of major economic or political instability in order to exacerbate and accelerate this instability. The experience of the previous (13th) Dalai Lama offers a powerful model to Tibetan leaders. When the Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, he organized military action in Tibet from exile in India, quickly expelled all Chinese officials and troops from Tibet, and ushered in a golden period of 40 years of defacto independence.

Consequently, the United States appears to have a major, albeit negative, strategic interest in Tibet — namely, preventing the conflict from turning violent. The current U.S. approach to Tibet is seriously flawed since it can neither bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict nor can it prevent the exiles and/or Tibetans in Tibet from launching a new tactic of large-scale violence. Even in the unlikely event that U.S. prodding persuades China to resume talks with the Dalai Lama and his leaders, since they appear unwilling under current conditions to agree to a settlement that does not include political control in Tibet, this will be an empty exercise certain to fail. Such a failure, moreover, could actually be counter-productive by increasing the anger and frustration in Dharamsala (and Tibet) and thereby push the existing momentum further towards violence (which would likely include "terrorist" type attacks).

Of course, it can be argued that Tibetans will not be able to organize and sustain a program of violent attacks against Chinese targets (and nationals), but it seems shortsighted for the U.S. to allow the situation to deteriorate to a state where this will be tested empirically. The current U.S. policy is deficient, therefore, because it is allowing a dangerously volatile situation to develop according to its own momentum when its most likely outcome is clearly not in its strategic interests. It seems prudent, therefore, for the

U.S. to reassess the role of Tibet in its China and Asia policy and *strive* in a quiet, non-public fashion to facilitate a speedy resolution of the conflict.

However, is there a reasonable compromise solution that could meet the needs of both parties to this conflict, and if so, what would it entail?

The following terms are suggested as a possible compromise solution. On the Chinese side, a number of important concessions would be necessary:

1. In the political sphere, a "new" Tibet Autonomous Region would retain its current political system but Beijing would move in stages to appoint Tibetans to head all its party and government offices. All positions of real power would be placed in the hands of ethnic Tibetans, e.g., the position of First Secretary of the Party would for the first time be given to a Tibetan, and by the end of a ten year phase-in period, the percent of Tibetan officials would increase substantially from its current 60-70% to as high as 85-90%.
2. In the cultural sphere, a variety of measures would have to be implemented to enhance the degree to which Tibetan culture predominates. One of the most critical of these would be to phase in Tibetan language as the basic operating language of government. Although all Tibetan officials would have to be bilingual in Chinese, and the education system would continue to teach Chinese along with Tibetan, restoring written Tibetan as the language of the government of Tibet would enable Tibetan culture to grow and modernize to a degree not possible now. Other cultural measures such as allowing the number of monks in monasteries to increase and permitting Buddhist clerics from abroad to give religious teachings, could be worked out by the parties.
3. In the critical demographic and economic spheres, Beijing would have to take measures to decrease substantially the number of non-Tibetans in Tibet and to reduce outside economic competition so that Tibetans become the main beneficiaries of economic development there. Tibet would continue to modernize rapidly, but the rate would be adjusted to the realities of the Tibetan situation. Since the overwhelming majority of non-Tibetans in Tibet are not legal residents (colonists), Beijing has no responsibility for their resettlement and

reemployment and could accomplish this, although not without difficulty.

4. With regard to the exiles' demand for creation of a "Greater Tibet," Beijing would agree to enact parallel changes in policy in ethnographic Tibet and both sides would agree to delay addressing the "reunification" issue until the new program has been in operation for five or ten years, i.e., until new relations of trust and respect are established.

The end result of such a process would be a Tibet that was predominantly Tibetan in culture, language and demographic composition. It would continue to modernize and would be run by Tibetans, albeit by "communist" Tibetans under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. However, if China in time develops more democratic institutions such as multiple political parties, the political leadership in Tibet would similarly broaden its base. The underlying premise of this compromise solution is that transforming Tibet into a "modern" society is perfectly compatible with preserving its rich language, culture and religion, and that it is in the interests of both sides to facilitate such a development.

To secure these concessions from China, however, will not be simple. Beijing considers that even an "ethnic" solution such as this would be a potential threat to its position in Tibet given the strong anti-Chinese and pro-separatist feelings of Tibetans, particularly those associated with religion and traditional culture. Consequently, a compromise plan such as this would have to include components that greatly enhanced Beijing's de jure control over Tibet and ended the internal and external attacks on its position there.

Only the Dalai Lama can provide this for Beijing. He, therefore, would have to make a major compromise that would involve two main areas:

1. return to China/Tibet and publicly accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.
2. work actively to create cooperative and harmonious relations between Tibetans and non-Tibetans, persuading Tibetans in Lhasa to stop disturbances and accept that a truly Tibetan Tibet is not incompatible with being a part of China or with becoming a "modern" society. This would include deflecting any international criticism of the agreement.

He would therefore have to use his enormous prestige and stature to change the attitude of Tibetans (in Tibet) toward being part of China. He could certainly do

that if he tried and if Beijing supported his efforts by promptly phasing in the changes outlined above.

However, this kind of compromise is unlikely to occur without external encouragement. If progress is to be made, a "catalyst-facilitator" is needed, and this is where the U.S. could play a constructive role, either directly through private diplomacy, or through a proxy country such as Norway or Mongolia. It would be injudicious to specify further the nature of such a U.S. role, but suffice to say that such an effort might well be the deciding factor in determining the direction the Tibet Question takes in the coming decade.

In conclusion, the Tibet Question has currently reached a dangerous turning point in its turbulent history. The Chinese are pursuing a policy that the Dalai Lama knows is changing Tibet, perhaps irretrievably, and that the situation will only worsen in time. At age 60, he must be thinking about how best to preserve his people and their way of life in his remaining years. He may decide to continue to sit on the sidelines, hoping that external forces will destroy his enemy, but it is more likely that he will soon feel compelled to adopt a proactive approach — either moving to preserve Tibet by accepting a major compromise such as that outlined above, or more likely by tacitly and reluctantly accepting a new tactic of countering Chinese policies in Tibet through organized violence. It seems clearly in the interests of the United States to develop a strategy that will ensure that he and his leaders choose the former over the latter.

Tibet, China, and the United States:

Reflections on the Tibet Question

Introduction

The Tibet Question, the conflict over what should be the rightful political status of Tibet *vis-a-vis* China, is a conflict about nationalism — the emotion-laden principle that the political and the ethnic unit should be congruent.¹ It pits the right of a "people" (Tibetans) to self-determination and independence against the right of a multi-ethnic state (the People's Republic of China) to maintain its territorial integrity.²

Though occurring in a very remote part of the world, the Tibet conflict has high visibility both internationally and in the United States. It is, in fact, a volatile issue that resonates throughout the American political landscape and has become a significant irritant in Sino-American relations. Nevertheless, despite this visibility, details about the conflict are not well understood. As is typical of nationalistic conflicts, the struggle for physical control of the territory has been matched by a struggle for control of the *representations* of past history and current events. Issues concerning the conflict, therefore, have come to be encapsulated in an opaque veneer of political rhetoric that is difficult to penetrate. Interested observers in the West have been deluged with contradictory claims and counter-charges that have rendered an objective assessment of the conflict excruciatingly difficult, even for specialists.

The aim of this essay, consequently, is to peel away layers of this "veneer" to illuminate the anatomy of the Tibet Question in a manner that can inform policy. Eschewing the "law-court" approach to such issues where the arguments of each side are compared and a "judgment" rendered as to veracity or legitimacy, the paper instead tries to explicate how this conflict evolved using a *realpolitik* perspective that emphasizes the strategic interests and strategies of both sides. It is clear that both parties to this dispute have vested interests that must be understood and accommodated if there is to be any chance for resolution of the conflict.

It should also be stated at the outset that the paper does not deal explicitly with violations of individual human rights in Tibet — e.g., arresting monks for peaceful political demonstrations or abusing prisoners. These exist and are deplorable, but they are not at the core of this problem. The Tibet Question, as we shall see, existed long before there was interest in universal human rights, and is fundamentally a political conflict. If there were no such human rights violations in Tibet, the Tibet Question would be every bit as contentious as it now is. The conflict, at its core, is about the control of a territory — who shall rule it, and what shall be its cultural and political and demographic composition.

Finally, a caveat must be made regarding what is meant by "Tibet." In this essay "Tibet" refers to political Tibet, i.e., it excludes what has been called "ethnographic Tibet" (the ethnic Tibetan areas in today's Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces).³ Although the exile Tibetan leadership seeks to reunite these "ethnographic" areas with political Tibet to create a Greater Tibet, in 1949 when the People's Liberation Army took control of these areas they were not part of the Tibetan polity ruled by the Dalai Lama. Consequently, they were integrated into China under a set of parameters and administrations different from that of political Tibet, and it is misleading to treat them as if they were synonymous.⁴

TIBET AND CHINA



The Qing Dynasty Period

The Emergence of the Qing Hegemony

Although the current manifestation of the Tibet Question involves the People's Republic of China with its communist, autocratic-style government, the Tibet Question is not about communism per se and predates the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Throughout the Twentieth Century, in fact, different Chinese and Tibetan governments have sparred over this issue, each shifting positions and strategies, gaining advantages at specific points in time, but not being able to achieve the ultimate, but very elusive, goal both sought and seek — a permanent, *mutually agreeable* solution to what should be the political status of Tibet. The current conflict over the Tibet Question, therefore, is being contested by players who carry a heavy load of historical baggage to the field of battle. Consequently, it is important to begin this discussion with an overview of the history of the Tibet Question in modern times.

The origin of today's Tibet Question is rooted in Qing (Manchu)-Tibetan relations in the late 17th and 18th centuries, in particular, during the period between 1720-1792. During that time the Qing Dynasty sent armies into Tibet on four occasions, reorganized the administration of Tibet and established a loose protectorate. The Qing Emperors' motives at this time were primarily geopolitical — they sought on the one hand to prevent Tibetans from using their religious leverage to unify the Mongols⁵ in a common front against them, and on the other hand, to oust their main rivals, the Dzungar Mongols, from Lhasa, which they had conquered in 1717. Nevertheless, even at the height of its power in Tibet, the Qing Dynasty made no attempt to absorb Tibet into China as a province. Tibet, therefore, maintained its own language, officials, legal system, and army and paid no taxes/tribute to China. The Qing Dynasty sought to influence the decision-making of the Tibetan government on issues that affected its interests rather than directly administer Tibet. It sought to do this after 1720 by reforming the administrative structure (e.g., doing away with the office of regent) and stationing Imperial Commissioners (*amban*) and a garrison of troops in Lhasa.

The precise authority of these *amban* is somewhat unclear, and in actuality, their power appears to have varied in accordance with many factors such as their personality and competence *vis-a-vis* that of the leaders of Tibet, and the nature of the political situation in China and Tibet. In general, however, it is clear that the degree of Qing power and authority in Tibet waned as China itself faced more

pressing threats in the 19th century. For example, the Tibeto-Nepalese War of 1855-56 was conducted by Tibet without any involvement from China, and the 13th Dalai Lama was chosen in 1877 without recourse to the "golden urn" lottery that the Qing Emperor Qian Long had ordered in 1792 as part of his "Twenty-nine Regulations for Better Government in Tibet." By the turn of the 20th century, therefore, the Qing hegemony over Tibet was more symbolic than real, and the Tibet Question was, in a sense, *latent* — Tibet did not explicitly try to sever its ties to Beijing, but also did not defer to the Emperor's *amban* in Lhasa.

That *laissez faire* arrangement was permanently transformed when a third party entered the scene and set in motion a series of events that altered the status quo dramatically.

The British Enter the Picture

By the mid-19th century, British influence on the Indian sub-continent had extended right to the border of Tibet as the string of Himalayan states and principalities fell under British influence. British India then tried to establish direct relations with Tibet, but the Tibetan government declined to discuss such matters with them, let alone permit them travel and trade. British India, therefore, turned to China, the nominal (and recognized) overlord of Tibet and in 1890 and 1893 obtained a variety of concessions regarding Tibet from Beijing. However, the 13th Dalai Lama refused to acknowledge them and would not agree to face-to-face talks with British Indian officials. Since it was now apparent that China had no practical control over events in Tibet, in 1903 London permitted Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, to send an expedition to Tibet to open negotiations. The Tibetans again refused to negotiate with this expedition, so its British officers and officials led their Indian troops deeper and deeper into Tibet, ostensibly to induce the Tibetans to negotiate. Defeating the Tibetan forces that attempted to block their advance, on 3 August 1904, they entered Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. They were the first Western troops ever to conquer Tibet.

Throughout this period the Chinese government (through its *amban*) urged the 13th Dalai Lama to negotiate with the British expeditionary force, and then when it was about to enter Lhasa, to meet with Younghusband, its leader. But China had no control over the Dalai Lama who ignored these admonitions and fled to exile in Mongolia, presumably to seek Russian support against Britain.

In order to secure the withdrawal of the British, the Tibetan government reluctantly agreed to British terms which were codified in an agreement known as the Anglo-Tibet Convention of 1904. Signed by only Tibet and the British head of the expeditionary force — the Manchu *amban* refused to place his signature on it — it gave India (Britain) the right to establish Trade Marts in Tibet and maintain British Trade Officials in three Tibetan towns [Gyantse, Gartok and Yadung]. It also excluded any other foreign power from exercising political influence in Tibet, a clause which was vague enough to exclude China as well as more obvious countries such as Russia. A large indemnity was levied and British troops were to occupy a part of Tibet contiguous with Sikkim until this was paid. By virtue of these terms, British India virtually converted Tibet into another of its "native-state" protectorates.

However, news of the fighting in Tibet and the seizure of Lhasa shocked many in London who had not authorized Curzon to conquer Tibet. Britain's interests transcended those of India, and considerations of Hong Kong and Russia led the Foreign Office to repudiate some of the political advantages secured via the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904. London also promptly assuaged China by entering into negotiations with it to obtain its acceptance of the convention Younghusband had signed with Tibet. The resultant 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention reaffirmed the Chinese overlord position in Tibet and restricted the British role primarily to commercial affairs. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian treaty internationalized this.

The Chinese Reaction

The invasion of Tibet and the Lhasa Convention of 1904 dramatically altered Chinese policy toward Tibet. Until then, the Qing Dynasty had evinced no interest in directly administering or Sinicizing Tibet. The British thrusts now suggested to Beijing that unless it took prompt action its position as overlord in Tibet might be lost and Tibet could fall under the British sphere of influence. The Qing Dynasty, although enfeebled and on the brink of collapse, responded with surprising vigor. Beijing got the British troops to leave Tibetan soil quickly by itself paying the 2.5 million rupee indemnity to Britain, and began to take a more active role in day-to-day affairs in Tibet. Britain's casual invasion of Tibet, therefore, stimulated China to protect what it felt were its national interests in Tibet by beginning a program to integrate Tibet culturally, economically, and politically more closely with the rest of China.

The position of the Dalai Lama during all this is important. He was languishing in exile, spending time first in Outer Mongolia and then the ethnic Tibetan areas of what is now Qinghai Province. His overture to the Russian Czar proved futile and his position in exile was somewhat precarious since he had been "deposed" by the Chinese Government in 1904 because of his flight. Although Tibetans never questioned his legitimacy as their ruler, the increased domination of affairs in Lhasa by the *ambans* after his departure made him unwilling to return to Lhasa without first achieving some accommodation with the Qing Dynasty that would guarantee his control of Tibet. In 1908, he went to Beijing to visit the Emperor and Court. Arguing that the *amban* did not faithfully transmit his views to Beijing, the Dalai Lama requested permission to petition the throne directly (i.e., to bypass the *amban*). Beijing, however, was in no mood to loosen its control over the unpredictable and independent 13th Dalai Lama, and rudely refused.

Ultimately, however, China agreed that the Dalai Lama could return to Tibet to rule, but since they did not trust him to follow their instructions, unbeknownst to him, they sent an army of several thousand troops from Sichuan province to support the *amban* and ensure that the Dalai Lama was compliant. Thus, when the 13th Dalai Lama arrived in Lhasa in late December 1909, five years after he had fled from the Younghusband Expedition, he learned that a Chinese army was on its way. As that army entered Lhasa in February 1910, he again decided to flee to exile, this time south to his former enemies in British India.

China again deposed the Dalai Lama and expanded its efforts to expand its real control in Tibet, its officials assuming more direct command of administration. A Chinese postal service was established and Tibet's first stamps were produced (with Chinese and Tibetan scripts). Tibet seemed set on a trajectory that would have ended in Tibet's incorporation into China proper. This, however, did not occur. The process was abruptly halted when the Qing dynasty was overthrown in China in 1911.⁶

The Period of Defacto Independence, 1913-1951

The Simla Convention

The fall of the Qing dynasty was a stroke of good fortune for the 13th Dalai Lama, and he immediately capitalized on it. From exile in India he organized a military force to regain his power, and with the help of Nepalese mediation, quickly succeeded in expelling *all* Chinese officials and troops from Tibet. The 13th Dalai Lama triumphantly returned to Lhasa in 1913 and at once unequivocally declared himself the ruler of Tibet, no longer paying even symbolic subordination to China. Many interpret this announcement as the equivalent of a declaration of independence. For the Tibetan political elite, the idea of Tibet as a modern nation state had now gained prominence.

The Tibet Question, however, was far from settled since the new Chinese Republican government continued to claim Tibet as a part of China. In fact, since one of the fundamental nationalistic goals of the Chinese revolution against the Qing was to restore China to its former greatness, control of Tibet took on great symbolic significance. Given the disputed international status of Tibet at the time, Tibet had to reach some accommodation with China regarding its political status or be prepared to defend its territory and newly declared "independence." As we shall see, it turned out to be unable to do the former and unwilling to take the steps needed to do the latter.

With no effective army at its disposal, Tibet sought to reach an agreement with China's new rulers and received support in this from a new friend — British India. The Government of British India had found China a bad neighbor during the 1905-11 period of direct Chinese power in Tibet and wanted to prevent any recurrence of such direct control. It sought therefore to create a buffer area in Tibet, i.e., a territory in which Chinese officials would not be in direct control. In 1913, with the intent of achieving that end, it pressured the new Chinese government to participate in a conference with itself and Tibet in Simla, India. The Simla negotiations produced a draft convention in 1914 that set the background for the Tibet Question during the next four decades.

Tibet initially wanted the conference to declare it independent. The Tibetan plenipotentiary expressed this in his opening statement when he said:

Tibet and China have never been under each other and will never associate with each other in future. It is decided that Tibet

is an independent State and that the precious Protector, the Dalai Lama, is the ruler of Tibet in all temporal as well as in spiritual affairs.⁷

China, on the other hand, forcefully claimed the opposite in its initial Simla statement:

Tibet forms an integral part of the territory of the Republic of China, that no attempts shall be made by Tibet or by Great Britain to interrupt the continuity of this territorial integrity, and that China's rights of every description which have existed in consequence of this territorial integrity shall be respected by Tibet and recognized by Great Britain.⁸

Tibet's only hope of achieving its aim was for Great Britain to act as its champion. British strategic aims, however, were not congruent with those of Lhasa. As in 1904-05, London did not want to support an independent Tibet or convert Tibet into an Indian protectorate (as had been done in the case of Sikkim and Bhutan). London was still unwilling to face the international criticism that support for Tibet's claim to independence would engender and also was fearful of negatively impacting British trade interests in China and Hong Kong. So Britain proposed that Tibet be accepted as a self-governing dominion nominally under China but with Chinese influence and power severely limited. With China excluded from a position of influence and power in Tibet, Britain would have created a harmless buffer-zone along India's northern border in which its political interests were fulfilled and its commercial interests could develop. Here we see the beginnings of what we can think of as the "Bad Friend Syndrome" — Western powers professing friendship for Tibet but refusing to support it in its real objective — political independence.

The final draft of the Simla Convention illustrates this. While declaring that Tibet would be completely *autonomous* from China, it acknowledged Chinese *suzerainty* over Tibet. Tibetans would administrate Tibet with its own officials in accordance with its own customs and laws, and China would not be permitted to station large numbers of troops or officials in Tibet — but China could maintain an *amban* and his escort of 300 men there. This compromise was not the independence Tibet wanted, but nonetheless was acceptable to the Tibetan elite because it met their nationalistic sensibilities by guaranteeing that they would retain complete control over Tibet's affairs, including the army, currency and so forth. It would also

legitimize Tibet's international identity and allow it to avoid having to prepare for possible military conflict with China. The Tibetan and Chinese Plenipotentiaries at Simla agreed to this political compromise.

The political dimension of the Tibet Question, however, turned out to be easier to accommodate at Simla than the territorial one. Tibet and China found it impossible to agree on where to draw the boundary between political Tibet and China. At issue was a belt of semi-autonomous ethnic Tibetan areas in Eastern Tibet/ Western Sichuan (the "ethnographic Tibet" mentioned in footnote 1). British mediation produced a number of compromises, but in the end the new Chinese government repudiated these and refused to ratify the entire Simla Convention.

Younghusband, however, did not drop the issue as British India had clear strategic goals it needed to secure. He sought permission from London to achieve these by signing the Simla Convention directly with Tibet. London, however, denied this, feeling it would be tantamount to recognition of Tibetan independence. Nevertheless, British India finally achieved its goals by taking an unusual action. It signed a bilateral note with Tibet binding each to the terms of the unsigned Simla Convention. British India then felt justified in pursuing its relations with Tibet in accordance with the "autonomy" stipulated in the terms of Simla, and continued to do so for the next 35 years. However, since China did not agree to the convention, for Tibet, the "Tibet Question" remained in essence unresolved. Great Britain had achieved all its goals, including Tibet's ceding of a vast territory east of Bhutan (today's Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh), but Tibet still had no *de jure* status accepted by China. And it had no guarantees that the new Anglo-Tibetan note meant that the British would militarily defend the rights specified in the Simla Convention if China sought to enforce its claims to sovereignty or suzerainty over Tibet.

Tibetan Attempts to Modernize

The failure of Simla meant Tibet had to face the possibility of future hostilities with China. This prompted a clique of young Tibetan aristocratic officials to urge modernization in Tibet, especially the creation of a strong military able to defend Tibet's interests. The 13th Dalai Lama agreed. In rapid succession, new troops were levied, officers were sent to India for training, plans were made to join the International Postal Union, and a British school master was hired to open an English language school in Tibet. Tibet was taking its first steps to join the modern world.

All of this, however, sent shock waves reverberating through the monastic and aristocratic feudal elites who held most of the land in Tibet in the form of manorial estates. Modernization was expensive and they now found themselves facing large levies to support the military buildup. Modernization, moreover, was perceived by the religious leadership as an ideological threat to the dominance of Buddhism in Tibet, and thus to what they felt was the unique character of the Tibetan theocratic state. They equated modernization with Western atheism and secularism, and over time believed it would diminish the power and importance of Buddhism. Consequently, they campaigned to convince the Dalai Lama that these officers were a threat to Buddhism and to his own power and authority. By the mid 1920s, they succeeded, and in one of the pivotal policy decisions of modern Tibetan history, the 13th Dalai Lama gutted the heart of the reform program by acts such as demoting the entire group of pro-modernization officers and closing the English school. Overnight, Tibet lost its best chance to create a modern polity capable of coordinating international support for its independent status and defending its territory. Maintaining its de facto independence now became dependent on external forces — British/Indian diplomatic support and weakness in China.

Nevertheless, from the fall of the Qing Dynasty (in Tibet) in 1913, to the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, *no* Chinese officials were permitted to reside in Tibet. China continued to assert its claim that Tibet was and had always been an integral part of China, but had no role whatsoever in Tibetan affairs.

Chinese fortunes in Tibet improved slightly after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama when Tibet allowed a Chinese "condolence mission" to visit Lhasa in 1934, and then permitted it to open an office to facilitate negotiations aimed at reconciling the Tibet Question. These talks proved futile, but the office was allowed to remain until 1949. China, however, still exercised no authority or influence over the Tibetan government during this period.

The Initial Period of Chinese Communist Rule: 1951-1978

When the Kuomintang (KMT) Government of Chiang Kaishek fell to the communists in 1949, the settlement of the Tibetan Question was no closer than it had been at the time of the fall of the Qing dynasty. Tibet was operating as a defacto independent polity but both communist and KMT leaders were insisting that it was part of China. Tibet, moreover, not only was militarily weak because of the late 13th Dalai Lama's decision regarding modernization, but it was also internally disunified as a consequence of a bitter war between the Sera Monastery and the Lhasa government. And internationally, Tibet had failed to secure support for its assertion of independence. Britain and India (and later the United States) dealt directly with Tibet as if it were an independent state, but at the same time continually acknowledged *de jure* Chinese *suzerainty* over Tibet. Much of the current confusion over Tibet's previous political status derives from this double-standard on the part of the concerned Western nations.

One example of this occurred in 1943 during World War II when the U.S. wanted to send two Office of Strategic Services (OSS) officers to Tibet. Since China had no control over Tibet, they were forced to secure permission directly from the Tibetan Government through British/Indian intercession. The two U.S. officers entered Tibet from India carrying presents and a letter from President Franklin Roosevelt to the young 14th Dalai Lama asking him to assist them. Although this must have looked like government-to-government relations to officials in Lhasa, in Washington, Secretary of State C. Hull carefully informed President Roosevelt that this letter was addressed to the Dalai Lama in his religious capacity, "rather than in his capacity of secular leader of Tibet, so as not to offend the Chinese Government which includes Tibet in the territory of the Republic of China." However, neither the Tibetan Government nor the Dalai Lama were informed of this subtlety. Tibetans, therefore, had no reason to assume the letter was not sent to the Dalai Lama as head of Tibet, nor that it did not demonstrate U.S. recognition of Tibet's independence.⁹

A more blatant incident occurred in 1948 when the Tibetan government sent a Trade Mission to the U.S. and Britain using its own passports. British officials in Hong Kong stamped these with entry visas valid for three months. These visas, however, expired while the Tibetans were in the U.S., and when the Tibetans went for what they thought were routine new visas, their request was denied. The Chinese Government (of Chiang Kaishek) in the meantime had asked the British Government how it could accept Tibetan passports when according to its official

position it did not accept that Tibet was independent. The British Foreign office then reversed itself and assured the Chinese that a mistake had been made, promising that in the future they would issue no more visas on Tibetan passports. The Tibetans were, therefore, advised to accept entry visas on a separate piece of paper called an "Affidavit of Identity." Surprised and indignant, the delegation refused, saying they would rather not visit Britain than accept this. The British Foreign Office then devised an ingenious solution which truly typifies the double standards rampant at this time. They carefully crossed out the words "three months" on the expired visa stamp and neatly wrote in pen above it, "nine months." This allowed them to keep their promise to the Chinese government not to issue the Tibetans new visas on their passports since this was still the original visa. At the same time they also were able to welcome the Tibetans to Britain on their Tibetan Government issued passports.

Consequently, despite the Wilsonian commitment to self-determination¹⁰ and later reaffirmations such as those in the Atlantic Charter¹¹, the involved Western countries (and India after independence in 1947), refused to recognize Tibetan independence although they dealt with the government of Tibet directly without reference to China. It is interesting to note that the USSR took a totally different position with regard to Mongolia (the former Mongolian People's Republic), which had a political status parallel to that of Tibet at the time of the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Stalin actively fought to secure international recognition of Mongolia's defacto independence, persuading Roosevelt at Yalta to agree to a plebiscite for independence, and then together with the U.S., persuading Chiang Kaishek to accept the results of the plebiscite which, of course, unanimously favored independence from China.

Tibet's political subordination to China, therefore, was repeatedly validated by the West throughout the first half of the 20th century, and particularly in the critical years during and immediately following World War II. Despite lofty rhetoric about freedom and self-determination, Western democracies maintained a consistent policy of bowing to Chinese sensibilities and accepting that Tibet was not independent.

The 17 Point Agreement

The victory of the Chinese Communists over Chiang Kaishek and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949 set in motion events which two years later broke the post-1911 Sino-Tibetan deadlock

regarding the Tibet Question. Like the KMT and the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 considered Tibet a part of China.

In its early years, the CCP followed the Soviet Union's lead and advocated a model of nationality affiliation wherein ethnic territories would be autonomous *republics* and would have the right of secession. By the end of World War II, however, its nationality policy had shifted towards political centralism — the new communist nation would be an indivisibly multi-ethnic state with nationality areas considered only autonomous *regions*. In late 1949, therefore, the new Chinese communist government proclaimed that Tibet, like Hainan Island and Taiwan, was an integral part of China, and set its liberation as a major goal for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950.

The Tibetan government now found itself in a very difficult situation. The fortuitous events that had prevented China from dealing with Tibet — including the Japanese invasion and the bitter civil war — were over and the communists had unified the country under their rule. The earlier concern of the Tibetan pro-modernization clique that Tibet would some day have to defend its independence had now come to pass, and Tibet's military was poorly led and armed, with no effective plan to combat an invasion. Moreover, Tibet's main international supporter, Britain, no longer had interests in Tibet. Once it granted independence to India in 1947, it saw its role as supporting India's foreign policy, which at this time was centered on establishing close and friendly relations with the PRC.

The Tibetan government responded to the communist's victory in the Chinese civil war by sending appeals to the U.S. and Great Britain requesting civil and military assistance in the face of the communist threat. The letter to Britain said:

The Chinese Communist troops have invaded the Chinese Provinces of Lanchow, Chinghai and Sinkiang; and as these Provinces are situated on the border of Tibet, we have sent an official letter to Mr. Mautsetung leader of the Chinese Communist Government, asking him to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet.¹²

We enclose herewith the true copy of the letter which our Government has sent to the leader of Chinese Communist Government, thinking that he may duly consider the matter. But in case the Chinese communist leader ignores our letter, and takes an aggressive attitude and sends his troops toward Tibet, then the

Government of Tibet will be obligated to defend her own country by all possible means. Therefore the Government of Tibet would earnestly desire to request every possible help from your Government.

We would be most grateful if you would please consider extensive aid in respect of requirements for Civil and military purposes, and kindly let us have a favourable reply at your earliest opportunity.

From,
The Tibetan Foreign Bureau, Lhasa [4 November 1949]¹³

The Americans were sent a similar appeal. Neither Britain nor America, however, had any interest in encouraging the Tibetans. The U.S. told the British "they were going to send a reply that would discourage Tibetans from expecting any aid."¹⁴ The receipt of these noncommittal replies from the Western democracies who were the main enemy of communism was extremely disappointing. But with its options limited, the Tibetan Government decided to send missions to the U.S. and Great Britain (and also China and Nepal) in the hope that face-to-face contact would generate support. On 22 December 1949, the Tibetan Foreign Bureau sent the following letter to President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson:

Though Tibet has remained an Independent Country for about thirty years without any trouble, but recently the Chinese Communist leaders have announced over their Radio claiming Tibet as a part of Chinese territory and many other remarks about Tibet which are absolutely baseless and misleading. Besides the Chinese Communists have already occupied the border Provinces of Sinkiang, Sining (the Capital of Chinghai), and also Shikang [province created in 1927 of the ethnic Tibetan areas now in Sichuan Province].

Therefore it is impossible for us to remain indifferent at such a critical time. Hence we are deputing soon Lachag Khenchung Thupten Sanghe and Rimshi Dingja to lead a special Mission to your country for the purpose of obtaining aid from your government.

We would therefore be most grateful to your honour if you would

kindly render every possible assistance to our Mission on their arrival in Washington.¹⁵

The new communist government protested loudly on learning of this plan, but its concerns were misplaced since the Western democracies were not interested in encouraging Tibetans, in part because they believed that this would make a Chinese invasion of Tibet more likely. They refused, therefore, to accept the proposed missions. The U.S. government feared that even answering the Tibetans in writing might "be considered by the Tibetans as recognition of their independent status," so Washington instructed its Embassy in New Delhi to pass on a verbal reply dissuading the Tibetans from sending the mission.¹⁶ Britain did likewise.

Meanwhile, in China, Mao Zedong was planning a strategy for "liberating" Tibet. He understood clearly that Tibet had an international status that set it apart from every other nationality group in China and was unique in that there were no Chinese living there. Tibet, as we have seen, dealt with foreign nations directly, signed international agreements and regulated entry to its territory. Liberating Tibet, therefore, could have serious international ramifications, and could even draw in enemies of China such as the United States. Consequently, Mao Zedong decided that the best strategy was to "liberate" Tibet peacefully, i.e., with the agreement of the government of Tibet. This would eliminate the possibility of a long drawn out guerrilla war in the mountains of Tibet, and reduce the potential for international intervention. The problem with this strategy was that the Tibetan government was unlikely to renounce its defacto independence voluntarily to become part of his communist state. Mao, therefore, believed that military action would be needed to force Tibet to the negotiating table (as the British had done in 1903-04), but that ultimately the goal should be to secure a peaceful liberation via an agreement. Mao, consequently, in December of 1949, ordered preparations for an invasion of Tibet's eastern province (centered at Chamdo), and by early 1950, the Southwest Military and Civil Bureau¹⁷ in Qongqing was designated to lead the attack. If the Tibetan government did not quickly agree to peaceful liberation, Mao wanted the attack to start as early as the summer of 1950. He feared that postponing action until 1951 would give the Tibetans more time to muster international support, and was worried that waiting until fall to start the attack could inadvertently lead to such a delay if the troops encountered early snow.

The Chinese communists, therefore, tried to persuade the Tibetan government to

begin negotiations for "peaceful liberation" by having well known religious leaders from Chinese-controlled Qinghai and Sichuan Provinces give assurances about religious freedom and so forth. When the Tibetan government vacillated on whether to send a delegation to Beijing and missed a Chinese-issued deadline, Mao ordered the PLA's 18th army to launch the attack on Chamdo. It began on 7 October 1950 with the clear military goal of disabling — encircling and capturing or destroying as a fighting force — the entire Tibetan army stationed in Chamdo — roughly 10,000 troops.

The Tibetan forces were poorly led and organized. Appointment as a general in the Tibetan army, for example, was simply another work rotation for government officials that required no special training. Consequently, when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) crossed the Upper Yangtse River it confronted Tibetan troops strung out in small units all along the river. These were quickly encircled and captured, opening the road to Lhasa. However, in accordance with Mao's basic political strategy, the PLA force stopped its advance and again called for Lhasa to commence negotiations.

The Tibetan government now saw its worst fear realized — it was under a military attack that it had no obvious means to counter. There was not even a plan for the Chamdo army to shift to a guerrilla strategy to harass the PLA. Consequently, Tibet turned for help to the world community, sending appeals to the United Nations (UN), the U.S., India and Britain.

The Tibetan appeal to the UN led to new examinations of the Tibet Question, in particular, whether Tibet was qualified to bring an issue before the UN since it was not a member. Article 35, Section 2, of the UN Charter said that, "A state which is not a member may bring to the attention of the Security Council or the General Assembly any dispute to which it is a party if it accepts in advance, for the purposes of the dispute, the obligations of pacific settlement provided in the present Charter."¹⁸ But was Tibet a "state?" The British Foreign Office examined the issue and concluded that it could qualify as a state,¹⁹ and so could bring an issue before the UN, but the British Foreign Office also felt that India had the primary responsibility for issues dealing with Tibet, and that Britain should follow the lead of the Government of India. London also did not want to see the UN demand that China withdraw its forces from Tibet because it felt the UN could not enforce this and such a failure would weaken the UN's stature. India, moreover, was intent on not letting Tibet hamper the development of close and friendly relations between itself and China, so was opposed to allowing the

UN to discuss the issue.²⁰ Consequently, when the question was raised in the UN by El Salvador, the British and Indian representatives were the first speakers and both recommended that El Salvador's proposal should be adjourned. And so it was.

The Tibetan Government, disheartened and isolated, then sent a negotiating delegation to Beijing in Spring of 1951. Much as they had been forced to do in 1904 after the British capture of Lhasa, these delegates reluctantly signed an agreement on 23 May 1951 — the "Seventeen Point Agreement For The Peaceful Liberation of Tibet."²¹

The 17 Point Agreement was a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan relations since it officially ended the conflict over the "Tibet Question." Tibet, for the first time in its 1,300 years of recorded history, formally acknowledged in writing Chinese *sovereignty*. In exchange for this, China agreed to maintain the Dalai Lama and the traditional politico-economic system intact until such time that Tibetans wanted reforms. China therefore achieved its most fundamental goal — Tibetan acceptance of its sovereignty over Tibet and agreement to Tibet becoming part of China. It achieved this by agreeing to continue the feudal-theocratic government and political economy, at least for the foreseeable future. The agreement also set Tibet apart from other nationality areas in that it was only with Tibet that Beijing entered into a written agreement with the traditional government that allowed it to continue to rule.

The Dalai Lama first heard of the signing while he was at Yadung, a small Tibetan town near the Indian border where he and his top officials had fled preparatory to making a quick escape to India should the Chinese invade Lhasa. The announcement of the signing of the agreement shocked them since the terms of the agreement had not been cleared before signing. A heated debate ensued regarding how to respond.

Two main factions emerged. One advocated denouncing the agreement and fleeing into exile, while the other argued that the Dalai Lama should return to Lhasa and abide by the terms of the accord. The pro-return faction looked to parts of the agreement such as Point 5 which stated that:

The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual.

The "rejection" faction, led by lay officials such as the Council Minister Surkhang, believed the Chinese could not be trusted to abide by these terms once they controlled the country. They viewed with apprehension vague sections of the agreement mentioning that reforms could be made if the Tibetan people wanted them.²² They also did not like the fact that the agreement gave China the right to station troops in Tibet and handle Tibet's defense and foreign affairs. And ultimately, they feared that admitting Chinese sovereignty now would preclude claims to independence later should the situation change.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, became involved in this debate in conjunction with its policy of containing Communist China. Heretofore it had played a minor role in the Sino-Tibetan conflict, but it now actively tried to persuade the Dalai Lama to denounce the agreement and flee into exile. It even offered to permit him and a few hundred of his leading officials to move to the U.S.²³

The sixteen-year-old Dalai Lama was not persuaded by this U.S. initiative for a number of reasons including the absence of a clear commitment to support Tibet as an independent country and the unwillingness to promise substantial military aid. He therefore bowed to the opinion of the majority of officials and monastic leaders and returned to Lhasa in August 1951. Chinese troops moved peacefully into Lhasa in Fall of 1951.

The 17 Point Agreement established a written set of mutually agreed upon ground rules for Tibet-Chinese interaction and held out the promise that Tibet could function as part of the People's Republic of China without losing its distinctive way of life. This was far less than the autonomy stipulated in Simla, but it was a formula China formally accepted. The Dalai Lama signaled his formal acceptance of it with a telegram to Mao Zedung sent in late October 1951.

Both sides, however, soon found that operationalizing the terms of the 17 Point Agreement in Tibet was neither straightforward nor easy.

Coexistence Under the Terms of the 17 Point Agreement: 1951-59

What really transpired in Tibet during this critical eight-year period of Sino-Tibetan coexistence has never been seriously studied and is in fact the topic of a new book I am currently preparing.

Mao Zedung, contrary to popular belief in the West, pursued a policy of moderation and patience in Tibet, although his ultimate aim was clearly to transform Tibet in accordance with socialist goals. He sought to persuade Tibet's leaders over time to genuinely accept "reintegration" with China and agree to a societal transformation to socialism. His strategy placed great emphasis on creating cordial relations between Han (ethnic Chinese) and Tibetans, and allaying Tibetan fears and anxieties. The PLA troops, for example, worked hard to differentiate themselves from previous Chinese regimes. Calling themselves "New Chinese," the PLA troops in Tibet emphasized they had come to help Tibet develop, not exploit and abuse it. They were careful to show respect for Tibetan culture and religion, giving alms, for example, to all 20,000 of the monks in the Lhasa area. This rhetoric was supported by enforcement of a strict behavioral code that precluded the PLA from taking anything against the will of the people, and that required them to pay for everything in silver coins (*dayan*) rather than paper money. Moreover, the old feudal and monastic systems were allowed to continue unchanged — between 1951-59 there was absolutely no expropriation of the property of aristocratic and religious landlords. At the heart of this strategy was the Dalai Lama. Mao saw him, in particular, as the vehicle by which the feudal and religious elites (and then the masses) would come to accept their place in China's new multi-ethnic communist state.

Mao's policy, however, encountered many problems. Within the communist party one clique argued that the party should back Tibet's second greatest incarnation, the Panchen Lama, since he was politically a "progressive." And many of the PLA's battle-hardened commanders in Tibet found it difficult to show respect for the feudal elites and sit by and leave the old system intact. There was strong feeling among the key Chinese generals in Tibet that allowing serfdom to continue was intolerable and that land reforms should begin. Plans were actually made to begin such reforms in 1956 although they were never implemented due to intervention by Mao Zedung.

Such feelings were particularly strong in "ethnographic Tibet" where they were acted upon in 1955-56 at the time of the "socialist transformation of agriculture"

campaign. At the end of 1955, for example, Li Jingquan, the Party Secretary in Sichuan, started reforms in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan. The result of this campaign was disastrous for Tibet since it led to a bloody Tibetan uprising which eventually spilled over into political Tibet and was a major factor precipitating the 1959 uprising in Lhasa.

Among Tibetans, Mao's policy also encountered serious problems. Although the Dalai Lama personally favored modernizing reforms for Tibet and was in favor of trying to reach an operational compromise with the Chinese,²⁴ he was unable to control anti-Chinese activists in his government. From the beginning, therefore, ultra-nationalistic, hard-line Tibetans created a confrontational and adversarial atmosphere. As in the 1920s, the conservative Tibetan faction simply did not want change. They felt Tibet was unique and perfect as it was. Moreover, they felt that because Tibet had been forced into the agreement with China through invasion, they were not really bound by its terms. Rather than try to live with the Chinese, they tried to create unpleasant conditions to compel the Chinese to withdraw and leave at most a new "*amban*" and a few troops.

By the mid 1950s, the situation inside Tibet began to rapidly deteriorate. Chinese hard-liners were pushing to begin implementing "socialist transformation" in Tibet proper, and Tibet hard-liners were organizing an armed rebellion. Moreover, by 1956 the U.S. was encouraging the anti-Chinese faction, and in 1957, actually started to train and arm Tibetan guerrillas. Mao made a last attempt to salvage his gradualist policy in 1957 when he reduced the number of Han cadre and troops in Tibet and promised the Dalai Lama in writing that China would not implement socialist land reforms in Tibet for the next six years. Furthermore, at the end of that period, Mao stated that he would postpone reforms again if conditions were not ripe.²⁵

The Dalai Lama, however, could not quell the unrest within Tibet, and in March 1959, an uprising broke out in Lhasa that ended with his flight into exile in India. The Dalai Lama then renounced the 17 Point Agreement and sought support for Tibet's independence and self-determination. The Tibet Question reemerged as an international issue. Mao's "gradualist" policy had failed.

At the same time, the Tibetan rebellion also failed dismally. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) support for the guerrillas was too little too late, and the Tibetan guerrilla forces were unable to hold any territory within Tibet as a "Free Tibet" base of operations as they initially hoped. The CIA subsequently assisted the guerrillas in establishing a safe-haven base of operations in northern

Nepal, but this had no impact on the political situation in Tibet.

In the wake of the Dalai Lama's flight to India, the Chinese government also renounced the 17 Point Agreement and then terminated the traditional government, confiscated the estates of the religious and secular elites, and closed down most of Tibet's several thousand monasteries.²⁶ Tibet's special status as a traditional political entity within the communist Chinese state was now ended.

The eight-year transition period, therefore, ended poorly for both Tibet and China. On the Tibetan side, Tibet's power elite was unable to develop and implement a realistic strategy that could either induce the Chinese to leave Tibet or create a niche within China in which they could maximize long-term autonomy. Different elements in the Tibetan elite pursued contradictory policies, the result of which was a premature and ineffective military confrontation that resulted in the destruction of the old society including Buddhism and all that they were seeking to preserve. And on the Chinese side, ideological zeal in prematurely implementing socialist changes thwarted any chance of winning over Tibetans to being part of socialist China. China was able to reform land tenure in Tibet to the benefit of many poor peasants, but, because of its religious policy toward monks and lamas, sowed the seeds of deep-seated feelings of nationalistic enmity toward Han Chinese and China that would later be brought into full bloom by the excesses of the Cultural Revolution.

Another less explicit consequence of the Chinese experience of the 1950s arose out of a serious split within the CCP regarding its Tibet policy. Throughout the 1950s, there were grumblings within the CCP about Mao's moderation policy, particularly what some considered his misguided views about the Dalai Lama who they felt was being duplicitous in giving the impression he was a progressive when in reality he was pursuing "splittist" policies. These elements quietly blamed this policy for the 1959 rebellion and the re-internationalization of the Tibet Question, and today some in China consider this "moderation" policy one of the party's (Mao's) greatest failures.²⁷

After 1959, the Tibetan exiles and China competed to legitimize their own representations of recent history and current events in Tibet. The Chinese talked about the extreme cruelty and abuses of the old feudal system and serfdom, and the Tibetans in exile talked about a host of cultural and human rights violations, including genocide, committed by the Chinese. This confrontation of "representations" continues to the present.

In this competition, the Tibetan exiles initially fared well. The Tibet issue was raised in the UN, and the International Commission of Jurists reported in 1959 that Tibet was "to all intents and purposes an independent country and had enjoyed a large degree of sovereignty."²⁸ Moreover, the United States took a major step toward recognizing Tibet's right to be independent when in 1960 Secretary of State Christian E. Herter responded publicly to a letter from the Dalai Lama stating:

As you know, while it has been the historical position of the US to consider Tibet as an autonomous *country* under the suzerainty of China, the American people have also traditionally stood for the principle of self-determination. It is the belief of the US government that this principle should apply to the people of Tibet and that they *should have the determining voice in their own political destiny*. (italic emphasis added)²⁹

The United States also adhered to the UN Tibet resolutions of 1961 and 1965. These, as the following illustrates, used language that supported Tibet's claim to self-determination:

... [The General Assembly is] *Gravely concerned* at the continuation of events in Tibet, including the violation of the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and the suppression of the distinctive cultural and religious life which they have traditionally enjoyed,

Noting with deep anxiety the severe hardships which these events have inflicted on the Tibetan people, as evidenced by the large-scale exodus of Tibetan refugees to the neighboring countries,

Considering that these events violate fundamental human rights and freedoms set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the principle of self-determination of peoples and nations, and have the deplorable effect of increasing international tension and embittering relations between peoples,

- *Reaffirms* its conviction that respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights is essential for the evolution of a peaceful world order based on the rule of law;

- *Solemnly renews* its call for the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination;
- *Expresses the hope* that Member States will make all possible efforts, as appropriate, towards achieving the purposes of the present solution.³⁰

For the exiles,³¹ the hope that the U.S. would exert leadership in garnering world support for their cause and help them regain their country ended when Kissinger/Nixon established rapprochement with China in the years after 1969. At this point, the U.S. withdrew its backing for the Nepal-based Tibetan guerrillas and the operation collapsed within a few years. With its China policy focused on improving the accommodation with China, Tibet became an awkward embarrassment for the U.S.. The Tibet Question not only was no longer relevant to U.S. national interests—in fact, it was potentially harmful. By the mid 1970s, therefore, shifting world alignments placed the Tibetan exiles in a much weakened position.

Consequently, the exiles' post-1959 efforts had no impact on the situation in Tibet. The CCP restructured farming and pastoral nomadic areas into communes, and, under the banner of the Cultural Revolution and the "Four Olds" campaign, placed Tibetan traditional culture under severe attack. Since this terrible period in Chinese history is relatively well known, it does not need detailed explication. In brief, in Tibet monasteries and religious objects and books were destroyed and religious activities were forbidden. Tibetans were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs that went to the core of their cultural identity. The class struggle sessions and the constant barrage of propaganda contradicting and ridiculing everything they understood and felt, sought to destroy the social and cultural fabric of the Tibetans' traditional way of life. These were terrible times for Tibetans in Tibet.³²

Post-Mao Tibet: 1978 to Present

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the subsequent fall of the "Gang of Four," and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, produced major changes in China that included a new cultural and economic ideology, normalization of relations with the United States, and new initiatives to reconcile two outstanding conflicts that concerned the unity of the People's Republic of China — Taiwan and the Tibet Question.

In Tibet, in 1978, China made a number of unilateral gestures such as releasing a group of prisoners, announcing Tibetans will be able to visit relatives abroad, and issuing visas to a group of private Tibetans to visit Tibet. This developed quickly into an "external" strategy for trying to solve the Tibet Question by persuading the Dalai Lama and his followers to return to China. Informal talks took place in Hong Kong in 1978 between representatives of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's elder brother (Gyalo Thundrup) at which both sides expressed an interest in reconciling the Tibetan Question. Soon after this, in 1979, Deng Xiaoping invited the Dalai Lama's elder brother to Beijing and told him that apart from the question of total independence all other issues could be discussed and all problems could be resolved. He also said that the Dalai Lama could send fact-finding delegations to Tibet in 1979-1980 to observe conditions in Tibet.³³ Beijing obviously believed that the delegations would be impressed by the progress that had been made in Tibet since 1959 and by the solidarity of the Tibetan people with the nation. China also felt that after twenty years in exile the Dalai Lama would be eager for rapprochement with the new, more "liberal" leaders of China.

The Dalai Lama responded by sending three fact-finding delegations to China, including members of his family. But contrary to what the Chinese had expected, these visits revealed to the exiles that Chinese proclamations of socialist progress in Tibet had little substance. The living standard of the Tibetan people was poor, economic development minimal, and the destruction of religion and monasticism almost total. They also revealed that the Tibetan masses, despite twenty years of communist propaganda, still believed strongly in the Dalai Lama and had strong feelings of Tibetan nationalism. Thus, the overall impact of the delegations was precisely the opposite of what Beijing had hoped in that it bolstered the confidence of the exiles at a difficult time in their history.

Beijing's external strategy was paralleled by development of a new internal strategy that sought to resolve the Tibet Question by improving economic conditions in Tibet in a manner that met the ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans. After

considerable preliminary investigation of the situation there, the communist party convened a major Tibet Work Conference in Beijing in early 1980. The following statement from that conference illustrates the new attitude:

We have been established [in Tibet] for thirty years. Now the international situation is very complicated. If we do not seize the moment and immediately improve the relationship between the nationalities [Han and Tibetan] we will make a serious mistake. All the members of the Party must recognize the seriousness and we must reach a consensus.³⁴

Soon after this, in May of 1980, Party Secretary Hu Yaobang and Vice Premier Wan Li made an unprecedented fact-finding visit to Tibet to see conditions for themselves and determine whether the plan of the Tibet Work Conference needed revisions. They apparently were dismayed by what they saw and heard, finding it worse than they had anticipated. Hu publicly announced a liberal six-point reform program on Tibet which included among its salient points:

1. Full play must be given to the right of regional autonomy of minority nationalities *under the unified leadership of the party Central Committee*. . . .

The right to decide for oneself *under unified leadership* should not be abolished. It is necessary fully and independently to exercise this right. Anything that is not suited to Tibet's conditions should be rejected or modified, along with anything that is not beneficial to national unity or the development of production. The autonomous region should fully exercise its right to decide for itself under the *unified leadership of the party central committee*, and it should lay down laws, rules and regulations according to its special characteristics to protect the right of national autonomy and its special national interests.³⁵

2. . . . Compared with other provinces and autonomous regions of the country, it is conspicuous that in Tibet the people's living standards lag far behind. This situation means that the burden of the masses must be considerably lightened. The people in Tibet should be exempt from paying taxes and meeting purchase quotas for the next few years. . . . All kinds of exactions must be

abolished. The people should not be assigned any additional work without pay. Peasants' and herdsmen's produce may be purchased at negotiated prices or bartered to supply mutual needs, and they should be exempt from meeting state purchase quotas

3. Specific and flexible policies suited to conditions in Tibet must be carried out on the whole economic front of the region, including the agricultural, animal husbandry, financial and trade, commercial, handicraft and communication fronts, with a view of promoting Tibet's economic development more rapidly

5. *So long as the socialist orientation is upheld, vigorous efforts must be made to revive and develop Tibetan culture, education and science.* The Tibetan people have a long history and a rich culture. The world-renowned ancient Tibetan culture included Buddhism, graceful music and dance as well as medicine and opera, all of which are worthy of serious study and development. All ideas that ignore and weaken Tibetan culture are wrong. It is necessary to do a good job in inheriting and developing Tibetan culture.

Education has not progressed well in Tibet. Taking Tibet's special characteristics into consideration, efforts should be made to set up universities and middle and primary schools in the region. Some cultural relics and Buddhist scriptures in temples have been damaged, and conscientious effort should be made to protect, sort and study them. Cadres of Han nationality working in Tibet should learn the spoken and written Tibetan language. It should be a required subject; otherwise they will be divorced from the masses. Cherishing the people of minority nationalities is not empty talk. The Tibetan people's habits, customs, history and culture must be respected.

6. The party's policy on minority cadre must be correctly implemented and the unity between Han and Tibetan cadres must be even more closely enhanced

Full time cadres of Tibetan nationality should account for more than 2/3rds of all government functionaries in Xizang within the next 2-3 years. (*italic emphasis added*)³⁶

This rather remarkable public statement is said to be mild compared to the secret report and speeches Hu Yaobang made to the party cadre, one part of which is said to have equated the previous 20 years of Chinese efforts to develop Tibet as equivalent to throwing money into the Lhasa River.

This decision of Hu Yaobang and the Central Committee of the CCP represents a replacement of the hard-line assimilation policy of the Cultural Revolution with the more ethnically sensitive strategy of the 1950s. The new policy had two main components: (1) an ethnic dimension — making the Tibet Autonomous Region more Tibetan in overall character by fostering a revitalization of Tibetan culture and religion including more extensive use of Tibetan language, and by withdrawing large numbers of Chinese cadre and replacing them with Tibetans; and (2) an economic dimension — rapidly improving the standard of living of individual Tibetans by temporarily eliminating taxes and "below-market" quota sales, and developing infrastructure to allow Tibet to grow economically in the years ahead.

However, unlike the 1950s, Beijing was no longer willing to permit a *separate*, non-communist "Tibetan" government in Lhasa — Tibet would continue to be ruled by the CCP.³⁷ This is the "unified leadership" that Hu Yaobang referred to above. While Tibetan culture, language and ethnicity would be enhanced, and Han Chinese working in Tibet would have to learn Tibetan, Tibetans could control their region only through Tibetan communist cadres under the auspices of the CCP. Despite Deng Xiaoping's comment that all issues other than independence could be discussed, this, in fact, was simply a given. Rapprochement from the Chinese perspective meant the Dalai Lama had to return to a Tibet ruled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Nevertheless, this new policy represented Beijing's attempt to redress the wrongs that had been done to Tibetans, and in the process, win their trust and support, albeit within the framework that Tibet was an inalienable part of China. These changes were meant to answer critics outside of Tibet while at the same time demonstrating to Tibetans in Tibet that being a part of China was in their interests.

And all this, moreover, was not just propaganda. Although many of the Han and Tibetan officials in Tibet disagreed strongly with this new policy, in the period immediately after 1980, China implemented various aspects of Hu's general program. Individual religious practices reappeared on a massive scale throughout Tibet, monasteries reopened (with certain restrictions) and new child monks

poured in to these monasteries to resurrect the old tradition. Signs in Tibetan were mandated on shops and offices, offices serving the public were instructed to use Tibetan language in their dealings with citizens, the number of Tibetan officials was increased, plans were made to improve education in Tibetan language and a number of Chinese cadre left.³⁸ And not only were exile Tibetans welcomed to return for visits, but Tibetans could travel abroad to visit their relatives.

While this "internal" strategy was emerging, Beijing also pursued its "external" strategy with the Dalai Lama. Informal discussions continued during the 1979-81 period, including the following letter sent by the Dalai Lama to Deng Xiaoping on 23 March 1981:

The three fact-finding delegations have been able to find out both the positive and negative aspects of the situation in Tibet. If the Tibetan people's identity is preserved and if they are genuinely happy, there is no reason to complain. However, in reality over 90% of the Tibetans are suffering both mentally and physically, and are living in deep sorrow. These sad conditions had not been brought about by natural disasters, but by human actions. Therefore, genuine efforts must be made to solve the problem in accordance with the existing realities in a reasonable way.

In order to do this, we must improve the relationship *between China and Tibet* as well as between Tibetans in and outside Tibet. With truth and equality as our foundation, we must try to develop friendship between Tibetans and Chinese in future through better understanding. Time has come to apply our common wisdom in a spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness to achieve genuine happiness for the Tibetan people with a sense of urgency. On my part, I remain committed to contribute to the welfare of all human beings and in particular the poor and the weak to the best of my ability without making any distinction based on national boundaries. I hope you will let me know your views on the foregoing [sic.] points (*italic emphasis added*).³⁹

The tone of this letter was moderate and encouraging given the normal exile demands for self-determination and independence. However, it continued to talk of Tibet and China as separate entities.

The Chinese government did not respond directly to this letter. Instead it commented on the Tibet Question when the Dalai Lama's brother Gyalo Thundrup secretly met Hu Yaobang in Beijing on 28 July 1981. At this meeting, Hu articulated five points on which rapprochement with the Dalai Lama should be built:

1. The Dalai Lama should be confident that China has entered a new stage of long-term political stability, steady economic growth and mutual help among all nationalities.
2. The Dalai Lama and his representatives should be frank and sincere with the central government, not beat around the bush. There should be no more quibbling over the events in 1959.
3. The central authorities sincerely welcome the Dalai Lama and his followers to come back to live. This is based on the hope that they will contribute to upholding China's unity and promoting solidarity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities, and among all nationalities, and the modernization program.
4. The Dalai Lama will enjoy the same political status and living conditions as he had before 1959. It is suggested that he not go to live in Tibet or hold local posts there. Of course, he may go back to Tibet from time to time. His followers need not worry about their jobs and living conditions. These will only be better than before.
5. When the Dalai Lama wishes to come back, he can issue a brief statement to the press. It is up to him to decide what he would like to say in the statement.⁴⁰

This position, which at the time was not made public, reflected the Chinese government's preferred view that the Tibet Question was fundamentally a dispute between China and the Dalai Lama rather than between the government of China and the Tibetan "government-in-exile." It also conveyed the Chinese unwillingness to consider a compromise in which Tibet would enjoy a different political system from the rest of China. If the Dalai Lama returned he would "enjoy the same political status and living conditions as he had before 1959," but not live in Tibet or hold positions there, meaning presumably that he would be

given a semi-honorary position such as Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress and would be taken care of financially. The political system in Tibet, therefore, would continue to be ruled by the communist party. He and his followers would return as individuals to "live," not as a new government to rule, and they would have to "contribute to upholding China's unity and promoting solidarity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities." Although it was not part of this statement, China's quid pro quo was to permit a distinctly Tibetan ethnic/cultural identity (including Buddhism) in Tibet, and to devote resources so as to improve the standard of living of Tibetans.

Beijing, therefore, was clearly interested in inducing the Dalai Lama to return to China. From its vantage point, finalizing the right kind of rapprochement would end its problems in Tibet. The return of the Dalai Lama would re-legitimize Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, end the international dialogue over the Tibet Question, and persuade the masses of Tibetans to genuinely accept being part of the People's Republic of China. The danger, of course, was that if they accepted the wrong kind of rapprochement, they could very well be creating new pressures for separatism in Tibet, or worse, transplanting the seeds of a new uprising there. Consequently, maintaining political control over Tibet was critical. Nevertheless, they were optimistic because they felt that their willingness to let Tibetan culture, religion and language flourish, and their commitment to help Tibet develop economically, made this an attractive package. With this in mind, China invited the Dalai Lama to send a negotiating delegation to Beijing.⁴¹ The Dalai Lama accepted, and in October 1982, three exile representatives arrived to begin what might have been a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan relations.

The problem facing the Dalai Lama and his leaders was how to respond to the Chinese at these meetings. The five-point policy outlined by Hu Yaobang had been a great surprise and disappointment to the Dalai Lama.⁴² It, in essence, said that despite the public rhetoric, everything excluding independence was not on the table for real negotiation. Consequently, should he and his officials indicate willingness to accept less than independence, and if so, how much less? Although they felt strongly that history clearly supported their contention that Tibet had been independent, at least from the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, they understood that China had physical control of Tibet and was a powerful nation that Tibetans could not defeat on the battlefield. The focal decision, therefore, was whether they should take a hard-line approach that held out for their regaining political control in Tibet because time was on their side, or whether they should adopt a more conciliatory posture in the belief that this was a unique

moment for them to secure the best deal they could to preserve an ethnically "Tibetan" Tibet. These very difficult choices prompted months of in-depth discussions in Dharamsala.

Compromise on anything like the level contained in the Chinese Five Points, however, was very difficult for the Dalai Lama and his leaders to even contemplate. For two decades the Tibetan "government-in-exile's" internal rhetoric had adamantly articulated Tibet's right to complete independence, and had depicted the Chinese communists as bestial, untrustworthy oppressors without a shred of humanity or honesty. Suddenly considering a return to live under a Chinese communist government, therefore, could easily undermine the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama and the exile government among the refugee community. It also could mean throwing away Tibet's right to independence forever, and the exile leaders genuinely worried about going down in history as traitors to their people. This was, therefore, a powerful emotional issue that was hard to intellectualize in an impersonal, cost-benefit, realpolitik analysis. Suddenly, the Tibet Question was more than a contest of "representations" in the world arena — the Dalai Lama and his officials held the fate of Tibetans in their hands and had to weigh carefully what they were committing future generations of Tibet to.

On top of this, the exile government was deeply committed to the recreation of a "Greater" Tibet, that is to say a Tibet that included traditional political Tibet and ethnographic Tibet. This had been a goal of previous Tibetan governments (e.g., at the Simla talks in 1913-1914) and was deeply felt, but it was especially important in exile because of the presence of large numbers of Tibetan refugees from those ethnic areas. The Dalai Lama had worked hard since 1959 to meld the disparate refugees into a unified community by including these Tibetans in the exile government as equals, and by setting as a fundamental political objective the inclusion of their areas in a future "free" Tibet. However, the goal of a Greater Tibet was not politically realistic. Tibet had not ruled most of these areas for a century or more, and it is difficult to see how China could have handed over large areas in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan, many of which included Chinese and Chinese Muslim populations that had migrated there well before the communists came to power in 1949. However, if Dharamsala decided not to pursue a demand for a Greater Tibet and this leaked out, it would be breaking the faith with the Eastern Tibetans in exile. Like forsaking independence, this issue was highly contentious and could easily split the unity of the exile community if handled wrong.

Working in tandem with these constraints against taking a conciliatory tack was the view of leaders in Dharamsala that they, in a sense, held the upper hand. The visits of their fact-finding delegations had revealed clearly that the majority of the people of Tibet were behind the Dalai Lama, so they felt they brought a powerful chip to the bargaining table — the Tibetan people's loyalty. Consequently, despite the overwhelming power of China and the absence of Western governmental support for Tibetan independence, they felt that China could not solve the Tibet Question without them. In retrospect, this seems somewhat over simplistic and naive, but to the Dalai Lama and his top officials in 1982, it was enough to tilt the balance in favor of holding fast and making no compromises. In effect, they concluded that time was on their side.

In the end, therefore, not only was there no consensus in Dharamsala as to what the Dalai Lama's "bottom line" should be regarding political and territorial concession, but there was pressure *not* to create one for the negotiations in Beijing. Dharamsala, consequently, sent its high level representatives to Beijing with a brief to talk only in general terms, e.g., to present historical arguments about Tibet and Sino-Tibetan relations. The discussions, therefore, did not get down to substantive issues about the Dalai Lama's return. The Tibetans made only a single comment about their political position, stating *in passing* that if China was willing to offer Taiwan the "one country-two systems" option, Tibet should receive far more.

The Chinese were disappointed by the Tibetans' attitude. They had hoped the exiles would come ready to discuss specifics about their return in a friendly and forthcoming manner, and were frustrated when they persisted in talking about general issues and past history in a way that indicated they were not ready to accept a Tibet that was under the "unified leadership" of the CCP. Like the exile leaders' over-assessment of their leverage, this expectation was overly simplistic and naive. Beijing wanted rapprochement, but did not want to enter into a genuine give-and-take with the exiles over the issue of changes in the political control of the Tibet Autonomous Region. In the end, therefore, this historic meeting not only produced no new movement toward solving the Tibet Question, but began to raise serious questions in Beijing about the feasibility of rapprochement with the Dalai Lama.

In the aftermath of the 1982 meeting, the exile leadership showed some good-will by refraining from commenting on the meetings, but at the same time continued to attack Chinese policies and human rights violations in Tibet,⁴³ often actually going beyond what the actual situation warranted, e.g. with charges of Chinese

genocide. Dharamsala still felt more comfortable pursuing an adversarial model of interaction than one that emphasized friendship and harmony as its goal.

On the Chinese side, opponents of Hu Yaobang's Tibet "moderation" policy interpreted the Dalai Lama's unwillingness to get down to substantive issues and his officials' continuation of attacks as a sign of their insincerity. In fact, some explicitly saw this as *deja vu* — as a replay of what they considered the duplicitous behavior of the Dalai Lama and his government in the 1950s. Beijing, therefore, moved to intensify its "internal" strategy by allocating increased funds for development. This policy was finalized at the Second Tibet Work Conference held in Beijing in 1984. It approved 42 major construction projects in Tibet and extended China's "Open Door" policy to Tibet, despite the concerns of some leaders and experts that this would draw more non-Tibetans to Tibet and would therefore exacerbate Tibetan hostility towards China and Chinese. In a sense, since Beijing could not solve the Tibet Question by inducing the Dalai Lama to return to solidify its control of Tibet, it sought to do so without him by quickly modernizing and developing Tibet while allowing Tibetans the freedom to express their culture and practice their religion.

Nevertheless, Beijing was unwilling to cut off discussions with the Dalai Lama, and a second face-to-face meeting between Tibetan representatives and China was held in Beijing in 1984. At this meeting the Tibetans came with a developed negotiating position. They stated that the Dalai Lama rejected the Chinese 5-Point proposal and made their own substantive proposal that included creation of a "Greater" Tibet that would be demilitarized and have a political status in excess of the "one country, two systems" proposal for Taiwan.⁴⁴ It was, of course, futile from the start. Beijing was not willing to discuss real political autonomy for Tibet. It was looking to enhance its stability and security in Tibet, not lessen it by turning over political control of Tibet to its "enemies" in Dharamsala, let alone give up control over a "Greater" Tibet. Dharamsala's leaders, in one sense, had misjudged both their own leverage and Beijing's desire for an agreement, but, in another sense, simply could not bring themselves to contemplate accepting anything less. They were angry and frustrated by the Chinese intransigence. In this strained atmosphere, a proposed visit of the Dalai Lama to China/Tibet fell by the wayside.

China continued to implement its internal policy, and by late 1985-early 1986, many cadre and intellectuals believed that Beijing would soon initiate a second wave of reforms which would fulfill the special autonomous status implied by Hu

Yaobang's statements wherein most officials would be ethnic Tibetans and the language of government would be Tibetan. And a new head of the Party in Tibet, Wu Jinghua, was appointed who was himself a minority (from the Yi nationality). He immediately began overt shows of respect for Tibetan culture, wearing Tibetan dress on holidays, and creating an atmosphere of support for development of Tibetan language and culture. Consequently, there was a feeling of possibility in the air in Lhasa, at least among Tibetan intellectuals. This was still China to be sure, and political freedom of expression and assembly as we know them in the West were not permitted in Tibet (or the rest of China), but great strides had been made in permitting Tibetan culture to flourish in a region that was still overwhelmingly Tibetan in demographic composition. Tibetans in exile were visiting Tibet in increasing numbers despite having to get visas as "overseas Chinese," and most Tibetans in Tibet who went abroad to visit relatives returned.

However, another current was gaining momentum in China as Hu Yaobang's liberalness was coming under attack with regard to China itself as well as to Tibet, where senior, more leftist, Tibetan and Chinese cadre felt the policy of making greater concessions to ethnic sensitivity was flawed and dangerous. These senior officials tried to obstruct Wu Jinghua's program in Tibet and criticized his actions in Beijing through personal lines of communication. But the party's policy in Tibet continued unchanged even after Hu Yaobang was forced to resign in January 1987.

Dharamsala, therefore, found itself in an awkward situation. It was clear that Beijing had no intention of allowing them to rule Tibet with a different political system, let alone independence, and it was also clear that Beijing was pursuing, with some success, a worst case scenario in that its new reforms might win, if not the hearts of Tibetans, at least their stomachs. Material life had improved tremendously in both Lhasa and in the countryside where communes had been disbanded. At the same time, China's economic power and international prestige were increasing, and a major goal of U.S. policy in Asia was to strengthen the U.S. strategic relationship with China. Thus, there was now a real danger that the exiles' role in the Tibet Question would be marginalized.

Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama responded in 1986-87 by launching a new political offensive — what we can think of as their "international campaign."⁴⁵ It sought, on the one hand, to secure new Western political and economic leverage to force Beijing to offer the concessions they wanted, and on the other hand, to give Tibetans in Tibet hope that the Dalai Lama was on the verge of securing U.S.

and Western assistance to settle the Tibet Question, i.e. shifting their attention from their stomachs to their ethnic hearts.

Dharamsala's New Initiative

The U.S. government was central to this new campaign. Of all the Western democracies, the U.S. had provided the most support for Tibetans during the difficult times of the 1950s and 1960s. However, when the U.S. jettisoned its China "containment" strategy in favor of detente, direct support for Tibet was ended. Tibet was no longer an issue even marginally important to U.S. national interests. The exile's new campaign, therefore, sought to regain active U.S. support by working through the soft-underbelly of U.S. foreign policy — Congress. The key innovation in this strategy was having the Dalai Lama for the first time carry the exile's political message to the U.S. and Europe, particularly at governmental forums. Prior to this he had traveled and spoken only as a religious leader.⁴⁶ With the help of Western supporters/donors and sympathetic U.S. congressmen/congressional aides, a campaign was launched in the U.S. to gain support for the exile's cause, in essence, to re-direct the significance of the Tibet Question from the arena of geo-political national interests to the sphere of core U.S. values — to the U.S. ideological commitment to freedom and human rights. The goal was to create momentum for the U.S. supporting Tibet because it was the just and right thing to do as freedom-loving Americans.

In 1987 several major breakthroughs occurred. The Dalai Lama was invited to speak to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in September, and in June, the House of Representatives adopted a bill that condemned human rights abuses in Tibet, instructed the president to express sympathy for Tibet, and urged China to establish a constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama (this ended up later in the year as an amendment to the State Department Authorization Bill).⁴⁷

The Dalai Lama made his first political speech in America before the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus on 21 September 1987. It was a carefully crafted and powerful talk that laid out the argument that Tibet had been independent when China invaded.⁴⁸ That invasion began what the Dalai Lama called China's illegal occupation of the country. Specifically, he said, "though Tibetans lost their freedom, under international law Tibet today is still an independent state under illegal occupation." The speech also raised serious human rights charges, referring twice to a Chinese inflicted "holocaust" on the Tibetan people.

The Dalai Lama specifically made a five-point proposal for solving the Tibet Question that called for:

1. transforming Tibet into a "Zone of Peace" — this would include ethnographic Tibet and would require the withdrawal of all Chinese troops and military installations.
2. reversing the population transfer policy which he said threatened the very existence of the Tibetans as a people.
3. respecting the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms — it asserted that Tibetans are "Deprived of all basic democratic rights and freedoms, they exist under a colonial administration in which all real power is wielded by Chinese officials of the Communist Party and the army."
4. restoring and protecting Tibet's natural environment and abandoning China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste.
5. beginning earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

This was well received in the U.S., and three weeks later, on 6 October, the Senate passed its version of the earlier House Bill. Ultimately, on 22 December 1987, President Reagan signed the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (1988-89) into law including these bills in the form of a Tibet amendment which contained as a *sense of the Congress* that:

- (i) the United States should express sympathy for those Tibetans who have suffered and died as a result of fighting, persecution, or famine over the past four decades;
- (ii) the United States should make the treatment of the Tibetan people an important factor in its conduct of relations with the People's Republic of China;
- (iii) the Government of the People's Republic of China should respect internationally recognized human rights and end human

rights violations against Tibetans;

(iv) the United States should urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to actively reciprocate the Dalai Lama's efforts to establish a constructive dialogue on the future of Tibet; ...

(viii) the United States should urge the People's Republic of China to release all political prisoners in Tibet.⁴⁹

It also added a proviso that with regard to the sale of defense articles, the U.S. should take into consideration "the extent to which the Government of the People's Republic of China is acting in good faith and in a timely manner to resolve human rights issues in Tibet," and authorized no less than 15 scholarships to enable Tibetans to attend college in the U.S.⁵⁰

While this was weaker than the now defunct position stated by Christian Herter in 1960 (see above, p. 15), and it was only the "sense of Congress," it was seen in Dharamsala as a major victory — as the start of a Congress-driven move to create a new U.S. foreign policy that would proactively seek settlement of the Tibet Question in a manner favorable to the Tibetan people. From out of nowhere, therefore, the U.S. was again actively involved in the Tibet Question on the side of Tibet, albeit through Congress rather than the executive branch or the State Department.

The First Riot — October 1, 1987⁵¹

These activities of the Dalai Lama in the U.S. were widely known and eagerly followed in Lhasa because Tibetans regularly listened to the Voice of America and the B.B.C. Chinese language broadcasts, and the Chinese government also broadcast attacks on the Dalai Lama's visit on local media. On 27 September, less than a week after the Dalai Lama's first speech in Washington, nationalistic monks from Drepung monastery in Lhasa staged a political demonstration in support of Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama's initiative. They began by walking around the Inner Circle Road (*bagor*) that is both a main circumambulation route (going around the holy Lhasa Cathedral) and the main Tibetan market area, but, when nothing happened after several circuits, marched down a main road to the offices of the Tibetan Government. There they were arrested.

Four days later, on the morning of 1 October, another group of 20-30 monks

demonstrated in Lhasa to show their support for the Dalai Lama and the previous monk demonstrators, and to demand the latter's release from jail. Police quickly took them into custody and started beating them. A crowd of Tibetans who had gathered outside the police headquarters demanded these monks be released, and before long, this escalated into a full-scale riot. In the end, the police station and a number of vehicles and shops were burnt down, and anywhere from 6 to 20 Tibetans were killed when police (including ethnic Tibetans) fired at the crowds.

Beijing was shocked by the riot and the anti-Chinese anger it expressed. There had been clandestine nationalistic incidents for years in Lhasa but these were small, isolated activities that were easy to deal with. Now Beijing had to face the reality that thousands upon thousands of average Tibetans were angry enough to face death and prison by participating in a massive riot against the government and Chinese rule in Tibet. This riot was particularly galling to Beijing because it coincided with the attacks of the Dalai Lama and U.S. Congressmen and seemed to prove to the world that Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama's statements about the horrendous conditions in Tibet were true despite the fact that they felt they were pursuing a moderate policy in Tibet.

The post-riot months in Lhasa saw more demonstrations by monks and nuns, and a steady stream of anti-government posters. Nevertheless, the police were able to arrest them quickly without provoking a riot. A cat and mouse game developed with the nationalistic monks launching demonstrations and the government trying to arrest the demonstrators in a manner that would prevent another riot, for it was clearly the riot that caught world attention, not simply the small demonstrations.

As 1987 drew to a close, attention in Lhasa turned to the coming Tibetan New Year in February 1988 and the accompanying Great Prayer Festival when almost 2,000 monks would come to Lhasa's Central Cathedral for several weeks of joint prayers. The question of the day became whether the Prayer Festival would go on as planned, and if so, would the monks try to use it to launch a major demonstration. The risk of such a demonstration sparking another riot was great since there would be thousands upon thousands of religious Tibetans in Lhasa at this time to witness the event.

Many key senior cadre in Tibet felt that the riots vindicated their contention that the moderate "ethnic" approach was dangerous and could result in the CCP losing power in Tibet. In fact, several ad hoc secret meetings were held in Lhasa and Chengdu (Sichuan) and reports critical of the liberal policy were informally

forwarded to Beijing. In Beijing, the new head of the party, Zhao Ziyang, convened a meeting of the larger Politburo to discuss Tibet, and in November, it decided that part of the present problem in Tibet was the fact that Beijing's Tibet policy had not been properly carried out due to excessive "leftism" in Tibet. However, at the same time, it also concluded that the Tibet policies had been too liberal. This marked the beginning of Beijing's retreat from the earlier approach.

Soon after this, the Lhasa daily newspaper carried the new line reporting that in addition to outside agitation, excessive and incorrect application of "ultra-leftist ideology" on the part of local cadre was a cause of the October riot. Until then it had totally blamed outside agitation for the demonstrations and riot. Now it admitted that its own officials were part of the problem. This was a major attempt to influence the attitude of Tibetans in Lhasa by being realistic and forthright, even though this admission certainly angered many senior officials in Tibet.

Beijing also now made a decision that, in retrospect, was ill conceived. On the defensive internationally, the Chinese leadership apparently felt it was important to show the world that its liberal Tibetan religious policy was working, so it pushed ahead with holding the Prayer Festival. Wu Jinghua, the head of the TAR, announced that just as he had come to the Prayer Festival in Tibetan dress in the past, he would do so again this coming year to publicly show his respect for Tibetans' strong feelings about their religion and culture. He also announced that his three main priorities for Tibet were religion, nationality culture, and united front activities, in essence indicating that the core of his program would continue to be to improve relations with Tibetans *by paying attention to their ethnic sensitivities rather than to economic development per se.*

But the main event in this attempt at reconciliation was a visit to Lhasa in early 1988 by the late Panchen Lama, Tibet's number two lama. He was sent to Tibet with authorization to make concessions to calm the monks and ensure the success of the Prayer Festival. The plan was to offer the monks substantial financial reparations and a loosening of restrictions if they attended the prayer festival and in the future concentrated on religion, not politics. To assist his efforts, and partially meet the monks' demands that all monks be released before the festival, the Tibetan government on 26 January 1988 released about 59 monks as a gesture of goodwill, leaving only about 15 monks in custody.⁵² On the following day, at a big meeting at Drepung monastery, the Panchen Lama told the assembled monks at Drepung that the government was willing to give 2 million yuan (\$500,000) in reparations to the three Lhasa monasteries (Drepung, Sera and Ganden).

The Panchen Lama's attempt to defuse the situation, however, was unsuccessful. The anger of most of the monks toward Chinese policies in Tibet was too great to be assuaged by money, partly because they felt that the Chinese were now trying to use the Prayer Festival as propaganda against the Dalai Lama's initiative, and particularly because they felt that time was on their side since the Dalai Lama was now succeeding in gaining the support of the U.S. Given this atmosphere, many of the older monks advised the government not to hold the Prayer Festival in Lhasa since they could not guarantee what the younger monks would do. They strongly recommended that the 1988 Prayer Festival be conducted at their own monasteries rather than in the Central Cathedral in Lhasa.

But the government now dug its heels and insisted the Prayer Festival had to go on. Foreign journalists had been invited so the government cajoled, threatened and pleaded with the monks to appear. Although many monks boycotted, most came and all went well until 5 March 1988, the last day. As the monks completed the procession of carrying the statue of Chamba (Maitreya), a monk shouted demands to the ranking officials seated at the ceremony that a monk who remained in custody should be released from prison. A Tibetan official told him to shut up, and he and other monks immediately responded that Tibet is an independent country. Just when everyone thought that the ceremony had passed without a disaster, the situation went out of control and the latent anger exploded into the second terrible riot in Lhasa. Arrests and a clamp-down in Tibet followed that further drew the mass of people to the side of the radical nationalists.

Etiology of the Riots

It is important to examine why the series of riots occurred if China, as was indicated, was pursuing a moderate, ethnically sensitive, reform policy. The Chinese, as mentioned above, claim that the demonstration was in part inspired by Dharamsala. While it is not clear whether Dharamsala (or other exile elements) actually *asked* one or more of the Drepung monastery monks to organize a demonstration, it is clear that the monk's demonstration was meant to counter Chinese criticisms broadcast on Lhasa T.V. and demonstrate support for the Dalai Lama's new initiative in the U.S. while he was there. To this day the monks are proud that they risked (and are risking) their lives to support the Dalai Lama's efforts in the West on Tibet's behalf.⁵³

One factor underlying this was the interpretation by Tibetans of events in the U.S. in the framework of the Chinese system of government. In China, delegates at the

People's Congress basically rubber-stamp what has already been decided by the party, so it was natural for Tibetans in Lhasa to believe that the support shown by members of the U.S. Congress similarly reflected U.S. *government* support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. Many average Tibetans in Lhasa believed, therefore, that the Dalai Lama's speech to Congress was a turning point in Tibetan history, and that the U.S., in their eyes the world's greatest military power, would soon force China to "free" Tibet. Events in the West are well-known and play an important role in determining the attitude of Tibetans, particularly Lhasans.

In any case, it is clear that those first monk demonstrators never dreamed their civil disobedience in support of the Dalai Lama would provoke a bloody anti-Chinese riot. The real cause of the massive riot — as distinct from the small political demonstration — is complex. Despite the Chinese reforms, a volatile residue of bitterness and resentment against the government (which in Tibetans' minds was synonymous with the Han Chinese) remained.

Tibetans were still very angry about the personal and collective (ethnic) suffering they had experienced since 1959 under direct Chinese rule. Like some minority groups in the U.S., they view past oppression as a part of the present reality and are angry at today's Han Chinese for this. The condescending attitudes of many Han in Tibet tended to reinforce this.

Moreover, the Chinese insistence on a crash program of economic development in Tibet created new problems, the most important of which was the large influx of non-Tibetans (Han [ethnic Chinese] and Hui [Muslims]) into Tibet since 1984. Ironically, this does not appear to have started as a deliberate Chinese scheme to swamp Tibet with Han "colonists," as is often charged, but rather began as the outgrowth of the government's wish to develop Tibet quickly. The disbursement of large funds for development projects created a substantial economic ripple effect, attracting thousands of Han construction workers whose presence in turn created a demand for scores of new Chinese restaurants, shops and services. That this was problematic was understood, and the Party Secretary in Tibet at one time in 1984 actually stopped Han and Hui coming in from Qinghai. But the larger need in Tibet for carpenters, masons and so forth gradually overwhelmed these attempts, and the success of these Han tradesmen and craftsmen sent a message to the surrounding provinces that there was profit to be made in Tibet, drawing in even larger numbers of new Han and Hui annually. Nowadays even Han beggars ply their trade throughout Lhasa. Thus, most Tibetans in Lhasa resented the Han Chinese increasingly controlling their local economy, taking jobs away

from them and Sinicizing their beloved city. They wanted economic improvement but not at the expense of transforming the ethnic and demographic character of Lhasa and Tibet.

The accelerated development program for Tibet, therefore, exacerbated existing local feelings of anger and bitterness over past harms done to Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, and worked to undermine the positive impact of the new reforms on Tibetans' attitudes and feelings. Moreover, it focused Tibetans' attention precisely on the volatile ethnic or national issue — too many Han in Tibet and Han getting too many benefits out of Tibet. In turn, this fueled the Tibetans' feeling of powerlessness and abuse at the hands of the dominant Han.

Another important problem area was Beijing's reluctance to permit as full an expression of cultural and religious freedom as Tibetans wanted. Continuing restrictions on the monasteries in the form of limits on the total number of monks angered the monks and many laymen, highlighting the fact that Tibetans are still beholden to an alien, Chinese value system for permission to practice their own religion and culture in their own homeland. This, of course, from Beijing's perspective, was a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy dilemma. Since the monasteries were hot-beds of nationalism and pro-independence activists, it was difficult for Beijing to allow them to grow in size and wealth since that would have meant strengthening the very people who were most dedicated to challenging China's position in Tibet.

And last but not least, one cannot underestimate the strong historical sense of Tibet being the exclusive homeland for Tibetans. Because there were *no* Han Chinese in Tibet in 1950, all adult Tibetans remember vividly a completely Tibetan Tibet. Tibetans felt that the Chinese had taken their country and were transforming it into just another part of China. They had (and have) a view that Tibet should be a Tibetan country (whether independent or not) that is run by Tibetans, uses Tibetan language, and follows laws that are in accordance with deeply felt values and beliefs that are at the heart of Tibetan culture. For most Tibetans, the new reforms had made progress toward that end, but it was not enough to be allowed as individuals to turn prayer wheels and burn butter lamps if Tibet were not a homogeneous ethnic entity. The influx of Han workers was clearly a serious step in the wrong direction and was not in keeping with the spirit of Hu Yaobang's policy.

In Fall 1987, on the eve of the first riot, Lhasa Tibetans, therefore, had ambivalent attitudes and feelings. Pent-up anger, resentment and frustration competed with the realization that cultural, linguistic and economic conditions had improved dramatically. And critically, the new successes of the Dalai Lama in the U.S. offered them what seemed a realistic alternative to China to achieve their aspirations — it gave them new hope that with the work of the Dalai Lama and the power of the U.S., independence was just around the corner.

In this atmosphere, the monks, the quintessential symbol of Tibetan culture, provided the catalyst needed to ignite the anger. The 1987 and Spring 1988 riots, therefore, were primarily spontaneous outbursts of pent-up resentment and anger. They were unplanned responses to a situation that Tibetans felt symbolized the loss of their nationhood and the denigration of their culture since 1959 by a dominant and alien group, rather than a rejection of the reform policy since 1980. They share many similarities with the terrible racial riots the U.S. experienced in Watts and other inner city neighborhoods, or the anger of Native Americans that exploded at Wounded Knee. When Tibetans saw the police beating up the unarmed monks, they responded with their ethnic hearts. They responded not to poor material conditions, but to past injustices and to present domination by an alien majority. Building one more stadium, or road, or factory or apartment building could no more eliminate that problem in Lhasa than it could in the U.S. ghettos.

Beijing's Shift to a Hard-line Strategy in Tibet

The concatenation of new Congressional support in the U.S. and the demonstrations cum riots in Tibet, led the exiles to conclude that they were making progress in amassing the critical leverage they felt they needed to pressure Beijing to yield to their demands for total political autonomy. This led to a major statement by the Dalai Lama.

In April of 1988, the Dalai Lama responded to a Chinese announcement that if he publicly gave up the goal of independence he could live in Tibet (rather than Beijing), saying that he would make public proposals within 12 months. Two months later, on 15 June 1988, the Dalai Lama made such a proposal in an address to the European Parliament at Strasbourg. It was the first *public* announcement of his conditions for returning to Tibet. Its main points were that a "Greater Tibet" should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on a constitution that granted Western-style democratic rights. This enlarged political Tibet would operate under a different system of government than

the rest of China and would have the right to decide on all affairs relating to Tibet and Tibetans. China would remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy, although Tibet would maintain and develop relations through its own Foreign Affairs Bureau in non-political fields like commerce, sports, education, etc. China could maintain a limited number of troops in Tibet until a regional peace conference was convened and Tibet converted into a demilitarized zone. The Dalai Lama indicated he was ready to talk with the Chinese about this, and announced the membership of his negotiating team, including among them a Dutch national as its legal advisor.

The Strasbourg proposal did not seek independence, but it also did not accept the limited autonomy of the Chinese political system. Rather it called for Tibet to have a new status as a kind of autonomous dominion. Since this proposal had been presented to Beijing at the secret 1984 talks, the contents were not new to the Chinese. Nevertheless, the Strasbourg speech was important because it was the first time the Dalai Lama openly told his people (and the world) that independence was not a realistic goal and that he was willing to accept Tibet as part of China if it could be totally autonomous. It was in this sense a courageous initiative.

The proposal was also an effective political move. If, as the exile leaders hoped, their victories had persuaded Beijing to view this level of political autonomy more favorably than in 1984, serious negotiations could have ensued. At the same time, it placed Beijing in a difficult situation since Deng Xiaoping and other top leaders had repeatedly said that with the exception of independence they would discuss anything. Now the Dalai Lama had given them just such an opportunity before the eyes of the world. Consequently, even if Beijing's views had not changed and the overture was rejected, the Dalai Lama's international reputation as a statesman willing to forsake the goal of complete independence in order to attain a lasting peace would be enhanced.

The Strasbourg Address initially threw Beijing into confusion. The leadership's basic view on what it was willing to accept as a compromise solution had not changed, but there was support for at least giving the impression that they were willing to discuss the Strasbourg proposal since it was not independence per se. Ultimately, after evincing some initial interest in meeting again, the more hard-line view predominated and Strasbourg was rejected as an indirect form of independence. In retrospect, given the internal situation in China, it is difficult to see how Beijing could have permitted Tibetans to have the freedoms associated with Western-type democracies and not offer the rest of China the same options,

let alone how it could allow creation of a Greater Tibet. It was also unnecessarily provocative for Dharamsala to include a Western advisor on the negotiating team given China's feelings about outside interference. Although Dharamsala presented this proposal as a conciliatory move, and although it created a stir in exile politics where it was criticized by many as a sell-out, it was in reality a continuation of Dharamsala's previous policy in which the bottom line was a refusal to accept anything less than real political autonomy.⁵⁴

Six months later, in December 1988, a third bloody riot in Lhasa was precipitated by monks demonstrating in commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

In the midst of this deteriorating situation, the unexpected death of the Panchen Lama produced a new initiative from Beijing. In early 1989, China tried to cut through the impasse by having its Buddhist Association quietly invite the Dalai Lama to participate in the memorial ceremony for the Panchen Lama. This initiative gave the Dalai Lama the opportunity to return for a visit to China without any overt political connotations or preconditions. He would come ostensibly as a religious figure. The rationale behind this approach was the belief by some in China that the negotiations had failed because Beijing had been unable to talk directly with the Dalai Lama whom they felt was more moderate than his ministers. Consequently, getting the Dalai Lama to come to China might provide an opportunity to break the deadlock.

The Dalai Lama and his officials, however, were reluctant to accept the invitation. The Chinese had indicated he would not be allowed to visit Tibet, so there was concern that Tibetans in Lhasa would feel abandoned if he went to China but not Tibet. There was also real concern that China might treat the Dalai Lama in a humiliating way, ignoring him or treating him as a minor figure. And since this was not a "government" invitation, there was suspicion that it would yield nothing of value in terms of the Tibet Question while providing the Chinese a propaganda victory. With events in their view going well, the exile leadership took the safe course and the Dalai Lama declined the invitation.

Beijing's situation in Tibet, meanwhile, deteriorated further in 1989. Tibetans in Lhasa continued to mount repeated small nationalistic demonstrations, one of which turned into the fourth Lhasa riot on 5 March 1989. At this juncture, Beijing accepted the fact that the situation in Tibet was out of control and initiated strong measures to quell the unrest — it took the drastic step of declaring martial law in Tibet.

1989 brought another dramatic setback for Beijing when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Tibetans everywhere considered this a major victory — an indirect but powerful statement that their cause was just and valid, and a sign that the world was lining up behind the Dalai Lama in his fight with China. On top of all this, 1989 also brought the Tiananmen debacle. Although this had no direct impact on the situation in Tibet because Tibetans had little interest or sympathy in what they considered a "Han" affair, it fostered a more hard-line political policy in China that made it easier to utilize such a policy in Tibet.

By 1989, therefore, Beijing's internal and external strategies for Tibet were in shambles. Unless China was willing to agree to relinquish direct political control in Tibet and accept a Strasbourg-like dominion status there, the exiles appeared bent on continuing their international campaign. This would certainly encourage more demonstrations internally and new accusations internationally. Momentum appeared to have shifted to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's international initiative had successfully turned the tables on China, placing Beijing on the defensive both internationally and within Tibet.

Beijing reacted predictably to the threat this posed to its basic position in Tibet. Just as it did in 1905 when the British invasion threatened its national interests, it now moved to a more hard-line, integrationist policy. In Beijing, it was hard for moderates to refute the historical parallelism of Mao's policy of supporting the Dalai Lama precipitating the 1959 rebellion and Hu Yaobang's, the 1987-89 riots. The conclusion in Beijing was that it had to stop "coddling" the reactionary and superstitious Tibetans before matters got completely out of hand. This policy shift, as mentioned earlier, began in late 1987 as a result of the first riot, and expanded in 1988 after two investigatory visits by Chao Shi, the head of security, and Yan Mingfu, the head of the United Front Office. Both of their impressions were heavily influenced by the views of the many senior Han and Tibetan cadre in Tibet who disapproved of the policy being implemented by Wu Jinghua.

China's new policy, therefore, evolved gradually as internal and external events pushed sentiment away from the more moderate Hu Yaobang approach. The final decision to shift gears to a new policy was officially decided at a Politburo meeting in the winter of 1989. A number of major new directives were issued. The general feeling among the leadership was that the measures Beijing had taken to liberalize conditions within Tibet had not produced greater appreciation from the Lhasa masses nor convinced them that their interests could be best met as part of China. To the contrary, they had increased nationalistic aspirations and had

yielded disturbances and riots that actually weakened Beijing's position in Tibet. This failure prompted Beijing to devise a strategy in which control over Tibet would be secured in ways that were not dependent on having to "win over" the large segment of the current adult generation who were considered hopelessly "reactionary."

In terms of general direction, the new policy had a number of major components. One key conclusion of the meeting was a decision to abandon any remaining hope that the Dalai Lama could be persuaded to play a constructive role in Tibet. The failure of the Dalai Lama to accept the invitation to participate in the funeral activities of the Panchen Lama in early 1989 was a major factor in precipitating this decision and the new policy in general. The Party would now solve the Tibetan problem by itself. In order to be able to accomplish this, a major effort was to be made to strengthen the leadership of the party in Tibet by sending better educated and more highly skilled personnel (non-Tibetans) who could help to modernize the area and its people. Similarly, greater emphasis was to be placed on educating young Tibetan cadre at higher levels. This reinvigoration of the party structure was to occur at all levels — from the top down to the village level.

A third component dealt with the problem of disturbances by employing enhanced security mechanisms to prevent the ongoing string of demonstrations from escalating into riots and to prevent the development of underground organizations with the capacity to create serious incidents. These measures have been very effective, and have created tremendous confidence in Beijing that they can handle whatever tactics Tibetan dissidents (or exiles) try in Tibet. During the four years since martial law was lifted in 1990, there have been no new riots, despite frequent demonstrations. This control was accomplished, moreover, without restricting the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of Lhasa — so long as Lhasans did not engage in political dissidence, they were free to go where they wished, meet with friends, invite monks for religious services, and have parties and so forth.

The cornerstone of the central government's new policy was (and is) economic growth and modernization — i.e., accelerating economic development in Tibet by Beijing providing large subsidies for development projects aimed at building infrastructure and productive capacity. This strategy seeks to modernize Tibet's economy and *people*, increasing their standard of living, and reducing their isolation by inextricably linking Tibet's economy with the rest of China. The new strategy is premised on the view that the key to winning over Tibetans is to improve their standard of living and modernize their society, and that to do this

effectively, Tibet had to be rapidly developed. Beijing's current plan includes 10% economic growth per annum and a doubling of average income by the year 2000. Beijing, therefore, is now trying to solidify its position in Tibet by investing substantial funds into development rather than by making more and more concessions to ethnic sensibilities. Just this year, for example, Beijing committed 2.38 billion yuan [about 270 million dollars] for a new program of 62 construction projects. And China also just announced that it is again considering building a railroad to Tibet at the anticipated cost of 20 billion yuan (2.36 billion USD).⁵⁵

In some ways, the new strategy is doing what Beijing hoped. A number of Tibetans have clearly benefited economically, and others are now turning their attention from politics to capitalizing on new economic opportunities. However, on the whole, the policy appears problematic in that it is creating a serious backlash.

A component of the "economic integration" approach is the freedom of non-Tibetans (Han Chinese and Hui Muslims) to do business in Tibet. Tens of thousands of Han and Hui have been drawn to Tibet to participate in construction projects and to open businesses, and these numbers are continuing to increase as Beijing escalates its economic funds and subsidies there. These non-Tibetans are part of the phenomenon called "floating population" in China — that is to say, individuals who are permanent residents in one area (usually a village) but who live and work temporarily in another, usually a city. They do not have "citizen" rights in the place where they work so are not "colonists" in the usual sense, but nonetheless live there for all or part of any given year.⁵⁶ As mentioned above, this began when China extended its "open door" policy to Tibet in 1984-85, but has accelerated tremendously as a result of the rapid economic development. There are no accurate data on the numbers of such people in Tibet (TAR) but they have dramatically changed the demographic composition and atmosphere of Lhasa, and are beginning to expand out into smaller "urban" areas such as county seats (*xian*). The number of these non-Tibetans is unprecedented in Tibetan history and has turned Lhasa, the political heart of Tibet, into a city where non-Tibetan residents appear to equal the number of actual Tibetans.

This influx has also resulted in non-Tibetans controlling a large segment of the local economy at all levels, from street corner bicycle repairmen to electronic goods store owners, to firms trading with the rest of China. There have been many complaints about this from Tibetans in Lhasa who argue that this flood should be stopped or severely limited because Tibet is a minority "autonomous region" where Tibetans, not outsiders, should be the primary beneficiaries of the

new market economic growth. Tibetans believe they cannot compete economically with the more industrious and skilled Han and Hui, so without government intervention to ensure the welfare of the citizens of the autonomous region, they will certainly become increasingly marginalized economically as well as demographically.⁵⁷ Beijing, however, has decided against stopping the flow of non-Tibetan workers coming to Tibet, responding to critics that Tibet is poor and that these people have more skills and business know-how than Tibetans and are necessary to develop Tibet quickly.⁵⁸

Beijing's reluctance to terminate this influx is, of course, also understandable politically. The large numbers of non-Tibetans living and working in Tibet provide Beijing a new and formidable pro-China "constituency" that increases its security there.⁵⁹ Although these Chinese do not see themselves as permanent colonists, the reality is that at any given time there are a large number of ethnic Chinese residents in key urban areas in Tibet. And many of these, like Americans who end up living their lives in cities where they went to work for just a few years, may end up living their lives in Tibet as well. Thus, since Beijing can not now persuade the majority of Tibetans to accept that being part of China is in their best interests, it can allow people to live in Tibet for whom this is a given. And one can easily imagine that if China's control over Tibet became seriously threatened by violence, not only will more troops be rushed in, but new laws could be promulgated to permanentize the large Han presence by offering attractive perks to the "floating population" to persuade a substantial portion to accept permanent status in Tibet.

Even more important to China's leaders is the expectation that these Chinese will provide a powerful model of modern thinking and behavior that Tibetans will see and gradually emulate. Based on the history of other minority areas, Beijing's leaders are partially banking on a process of acculturation in which the more "advanced" Han will open up Tibetans to new ideas and attitudes and create a new "modern" Tibetan in the process who will not be so influenced by religion and lamas. Thus, while Beijing realizes that its open-door policy will likely create much pain and anguish among Tibetans in the short run, it feels that this is the price it must pay for modernizing Tibetan society, and that in the long run it will triumph.

Beijing is also trying to use the education system to create a "modern," better educated Tibetan elite. For example, in addition to the standard school system in Tibet, a program of building special Tibetan lower-middle schools in other parts

of China began in 1985 and was expanded substantially after 1987. Today there are roughly 10,000 Tibetan youths attending such schools throughout the rest of China, and more also attend upper middle schools and vocational schools. In 1994, another wave of educational and party reform was begun within Tibet that seeks both to reduce illiteracy and to control more closely the content of education so that Tibetan students will not be exposed to subtle nationalist, separatist ideology. Similarly, in 1994, Tibet government officials were ordered to recall any of their children who were attending school in Dharamsala and to cease keeping photographs of the Dalai Lama in their homes.⁶⁰

While such measures are unlikely to eliminate ethnic loyalties and sentiments — e.g., Tibetans living in inland China in many instances actually have their ethnic identities reinforced when they encounter prejudice and bigotry at the hands of local Han — they may well in time create a category of better educated, less religious Tibetans who feel more comfortable living as part of Chinese society. It is too early to assess this clearly.

Beijing's current Tibet policy, moreover, extends also to cultural issues. While Tibetans are free to dress, speak, write and live "Tibetan," Beijing is now reluctant to implement (institutionalize) additional "cultural" changes that would emphasize the distinctness of Tibet and isolate Tibet further from the rest of China, for example, language reforms that would mandate Tibetan language as the standard for government offices. It also continues to maintain ceilings on the number of monks monasteries can hold and has tightened up control over rebuilding old monasteries or renovating/expanding ones already in use. Nor is it willing to consider the argument that relative demographic homogeneity is needed for Tibetan culture to flourish. In essence, therefore, Beijing's post-1989 hard-line policy has implicitly redefined what is meant by ethnic or cultural autonomy in Tibet. There are still special subsidies and preferential treatment in a number of areas such as family planning and education, but the basic policy has moved from the view that Tibet has a special status in China because of its past history to the view that Tibet is just another ethnic group in a multi-ethnic state. Tibet, therefore, is seen now as a region in which Tibetans can practice their culture if they wish, but without a special commitment to demographic and linguistic homogeneity.

Thus, although the cultural freedoms of Tibetans were not rescinded, the overall thrust of the earlier approach was shelved as unrealistic and ineffective and a more hard-line policy was implemented in which modernizing Tibet and creating a new

breed of "modern" Tibetans took precedence over catering to ethnic sensibilities. Similarly, measures that made Tibet more distinct and separate from the rest of China were rejected as antithetical to China's national interest. All of this, however, strikes at the heart of Tibetans' view of Tibet as the homeland of their people and culture. It highlights their continued powerlessness *vis-a-vis* Han interests and exacerbates the bitter enmity many Tibetans feel toward Han Chinese and the central government. Beijing, therefore, has embarked on a high-risk strategy in Tibet that may very well backfire and exacerbate the very violence, bloodshed and hatred it seeks to overcome.

This new high-risk strategy in Tibet has relegated the Dalai Lama to the sidelines and is forcing him to watch events unfold that from his point of view are tragic. For well over a thousand years of recorded history, through wars and conquest, famines and natural disasters, Tibet remained the exclusive home of a people. Now Tibetans in Tibet and in exile see this being lost right under their eyes. The Dalai Lama continues to experience great international sympathy and has tremendous influence over the attitudes of the local Tibetans in Tibet, but he has no leverage to stop China's new policy since it is not dependent on winning the approval of local Tibetans (in the short run at least) and since the international community has refrained from providing him meaningful support. Beijing, therefore, has, in a sense, turned the tables back on Dharamsala, and the triumphs won by the Dalai Lama's international campaign look more and more like pyrrhic victories. The international initiative won significant symbolic gains for the exiles in the West, but not only did it not compel China to yield to its demands, it played a major role in precipitating the new hard-line policy that is changing the nature of Tibet. Ironically, by threatening China's political hold over Tibet, Dharamsala and its Western supporters provided the advocates of a hard-line Tibet policy the leverage they needed to shift Beijing's Tibet policy away from the ethnically sensitive one advocated by Hu Yaobang in the early 1980s.

The Future

What of the future? How is this conflict likely to play out in the coming years? Is there any common ground upon which reconciliation between the Dalai Lama and China can be constructed? Does the United States have a role to play?

China

Beijing now has little interest in holding discussions with the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile because it considers this approach unlikely to be fruitful. On the one hand, it feels the Dalai Lama is still unwilling to accept China's terms for reconciliation, and on the other, it fears that token talks might further fuel Tibetans' separatist hopes and convey the message that the Dalai Lama rather than Beijing will solve its problems. Beijing, therefore, is proceeding at full speed with a policy to develop and modernize Tibet rapidly and thoroughly. As indicated above, this policy is integrating Tibet with the rest of China, bringing many Chinese entrepreneurs/laborers to Tibet to work, and increasing the size of Beijing's non-Tibetan "constituency" in Tibet.

This policy is attractive in Beijing because it can solidify China's position in Tibet regardless of what the Dalai Lama or Tibetans think or do. Many in Beijing argue that this strategy will ultimately create a new generation of Tibetans who will consider being a part of China is in their interests. Moreover, even if it does not, it will so radically change the demographic composition of Tibet and the nature of its economy that this failure will not weaken Beijing's control over Tibet. Consequently, from the Chinese side, conditions now are not conducive for serious participation in a negotiated solution, let alone for making a dramatic compromise. Beijing's integrationist/acclimationist policy is working well, its security measures are functioning effectively, and the absence of a U.S. threat of external sanctions allows them to pursue this with impunity. The current uncertainty over political succession in China adds to the inopportune of Beijing's major leaders taking new risks over Tibet.

Nevertheless, many experts and moderates in Beijing and Tibet disagree with the assumptions underlying the hard-line approach. They are concerned that it will not produce the long-term stability in Tibet that Beijing wants because it is exacerbating the alienation of Tibetans, even young ones, intensifying their feelings of ethnic hatred and political hopelessness, and inculcating the idea that Tibetans cannot have their nationalistic aspirations met as part of the People's Republic of China. There remains, therefore, substantial latent sentiment that the

long-term interests of China would be best served by a return to a more ethnically sensitive Tibet policy.

The Dalai Lama and Dharamsala

The situation in the exile community also is not particularly favorable for a negotiated resolution of the current impasse. The Dalai Lama and his top officials are anxious to stop the influx of non-Tibetans into Tibet, arguing that Tibetan culture, religion and language cannot flourish if Tibet becomes swamped with non-Tibetans. And they, of course, hold deep convictions that Tibet should be a predominately Tibetan area whether independent or part of China. Consequently, they are encouraging supporters in the West to urge Beijing to resume talks with them and are approaching other "neutral" countries to intercede on their behalf. However, it is not clear whether the Dalai Lama is ready to accept concessions that would make a new round of talks fruitful. The question facing the Dalai Lama (and his leaders) now is similar to the one they confronted in 1982 when their first delegation went to Beijing — how much less than independence are they willing to accept. Is time on their side or is time running out? There is still no consensus among the top Dharamsala leaders about this. The same concatenation of forces that made a compromise without real political autonomy difficult in 1982 is present in 1995. The fundamental impasse, therefore, is the same as it was in the early 1980s — China is unwilling to give the Dalai Lama complete political autonomy, and the Dalai Lama is unwilling to accept less than that. What is new, however, is China's current Tibet policy. It is exerting tremendous pressure on the Dalai Lama and his leaders to either quickly resolve the conflict or to develop effective counter-measures that will prevent China from changing the ethnic and economic character of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has several options. The one he is utilizing is to continue his current strategy. It seeks to secure greater international support to pressure China to moderate its policies in Tibet while simultaneously working to increase international acceptance of Tibetans' right to independence/self-determination. The latter issue is considered a major goal since China repeatedly uses the absence of international acceptance of Tibet's right to self-determination to support its claims that Tibet is a part of China. Support from the U.S. Congress is central to this since the State Department and the executive branch oppose such a change in policy. American internal politics, therefore, is intimately linked to the Tibet Question.

The recent U.S. elections, however, brought ambivalent changes in Congress, and

it is difficult to assess overall whether there will be more or less support for Tibet-related legislation under the leadership of the Republican party. Because the new Republican chairmen of the House and Senate foreign affairs committees (Helms and Gilman) are both strong supporters of Tibet, the next two years may provide the exiles further opportunity to chip away at the independence issue. There is, for example, movement among the pro-Tibet forces in Congress to pressure the administration to appoint a special envoy to the Dalai Lama's "government-in-exile." There is also a possibility that the current tensions in U.S.-China relations will offer new opportunities for securing support from the executive branch. On the other hand, if the Republican Congress is able to enact legislation for a presidential line-item veto, the Congressional strategy of tacking on pro-Tibet amendments to important measures such as the State Department fiscal allocation bills, would, presumably, no longer be viable.

However, even if the pro-Tibetan forces in Congress force the State Department to send an envoy to the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, it and similar endeavors are clearly only symbolic victories. The U.S. and other Western countries have demonstrated that they are not willing to alienate China over human rights in general or Tibet in particular. And even if they were, it is not at all certain they would be able to force China to yield on something so intrinsic to its national security interests. These "victories," therefore, will no more persuade or compel China to moderate its current policy in Tibet than previous ones, and could very well motivate Beijing in the opposite direction — to intensify its commitment to the hard-line policy. Thus, like players on a losing football team who are awarded stars for their helmets, these Congressional efforts make everyone feel good but do not change the outcome of the contest. And to the extent that they antagonize the Chinese and encourage rigidity among the exile leadership, they may actually exacerbate an already dangerous situation. It is difficult not to conclude that the Western supporters of the Tibetan exiles have paid too little attention to the unintended consequences of their actions on the situation in Tibet. Their role in the Sino-Tibetan conflict may, in the future, be considered another example of the "bad friend" syndrome mentioned earlier.

The Dalai Lama and his officials, however, appear to understand the current limitations of Western support so do not expect the West to force China out of Tibet. Consequently, implicit in this strategy is the hope that the flow of history will provide them the victory they desire but cannot attain on their own. Ideally, they hope that China will soon disintegrate like the Qing Dynasty did in 1911 (and the USSR more recently), and that this will afford them the opportunity to regain

control over Tibet. But even if this does not occur, they hope that the supreme leader who replaces Deng Xiaoping will be more sympathetic to giving Tibetans real political autonomy. In essence, therefore, the Dalai Lama and his officials are pursuing a waiting strategy. While waiting for history to solve their dilemma in a satisfactory manner, they are trying to induce Western nations to renounce their acceptance of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. This is the safe option for Dharamsala. It allows them to avoid making painful compromises while keeping the Tibet Question alive internationally.

However, there is an obvious downside to this course of action — or inaction. Tibet is being transformed in a manner they abhor, and if the current process continues for any length of time, this transformation will likely be difficult to reverse. Because of this, Dharamsala is unlikely to sustain this "policy of waiting" for very long. If history does not fulfill their hopes in the near future, they will likely feel compelled to move in one of two directions.

One such direction would be compromise — the Dalai Lama sending Beijing a clear message that he is ready to scale down his demands in order to preserve an ethnically homogeneous Tibetan homeland. Such a realpolitik initiative might occur after the death of Deng Xiaoping if the Dalai Lama concluded that China was not going to disintegrate and that he must take steps to reverse Beijing's current policy and preserve Tibetan identity. This decision would likely split the fragile unity of the exile community so would mean placing the interests of Tibetans in Tibet ahead of the interests of the 130,000 Tibetans in exile, and is not very likely. Nevertheless, more will be said below about what such a compromise solution might encompass.

A more likely new direction would be escalation — to encourage (or organize) violent opposition in Tibet. Throughout the 1980s, both sides have adjusted tactics to counter their opponent's initiatives. A campaign of violence is congruent with this pattern in that it would seek to disrupt Beijing's new hard-line policies by preventing China from pursuing business as usual in Tibet. Ultimately, such a strategy would seek to persuade Beijing to adopt a more conciliatory line, not militarily drive them from Tibet. Very likely such a strategy would initially be based outside of Tibet and carried out by small units of trained and dedicated militants, but it could well spread within Tibet.

If such a strategy were successful, it could help to destabilize China during the dangerous leadership transition period. But if even only partially successful, it

could curtail tourism in Tibet, impede the growth of overseas investment there, threaten the security of all non-Tibetans in Tibet, and heighten international awareness of the seriousness of the problem in Tibet. It would, in essence, seek to demonstrate to China the futility of the hard-line policy by showing that the ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans cannot be discounted. If done competently, China would be unable to prevent such attacks without again resorting to martial law in Tibet, but even then, the Tibetan militants could easily respond by shifting their attention from Tibet to Tibet-related targets in Sichuan and Qinghai. Such a decision, however, would be a high-risk strategy since it could easily backfire, alienating Western supporters while precipitating mass arrests and a full-blown counter-offensive of Sinicization and colonization in Tibet.

This kind of option would be extremely difficult for the Dalai Lama to sanction given his strong feelings about non-violence, but it may also be difficult for him to prevent. It could well occur even if he personally opposed it. His own failure to force China to moderate its policies at a time when the character of Tibet is so obviously being altered could lead other more militant Tibetans to declare his civil disobedience approach a failure and turn to more violent approaches on their own. *The crux of the matter is that Tibetans are unlikely to stand on the sidelines for much longer watching Beijing transform their homeland with impunity.* Nationalistic emotions coupled with desperation and anger make a powerful brew, and there are Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet who are intoxicated with the idea of beginning such a campaign of focused violence — in their view a "war of conscience," a Tibetan-style intifada. There are, it appears, at least two groups of exile Tibetans now actively seeking outside funding to organize and launch such activities, at least one of which is doing so in the U.S.. The real question, therefore, may not be will they, but rather when will they decide they can wait no longer to do so. Consequently, while the specter of Tibet becoming engulfed in the kind of ethnic violence found in the Middle East and North Ireland is not pleasant to contemplate, it is not all that far fetched given the current frustration and anger Tibetans feel, and their strategic need for creating powerful new leverage with Beijing.

It is also, of course, possible that neither compromise nor violence will occur, and that the Dalai Lama will simply continue to do what he and his officials are now doing — chipping away at China's legal position while waiting either for China to change or Tibet's so-called friends to force China to yield, even if that requires decades or centuries.

The Tibet Question, therefore, appears to have reached a critical juncture in its long history. Both sides seem incapable of taking the risks necessary to work out a compromise solution to the conflict, preferring instead to continue developing adversarial strategies and tactics designed to thwart their opponent and register gains for their own side. However, as the exiles become more and more impotent to change the situation in Tibet, their frustration will increase and the danger of this conflict escalating into serious violence will increase exponentially.

The United States and the Tibet Question

This essay is not the appropriate venue to detail the tacks and turns U.S.-Tibet relations have taken over the past five decades,⁶¹ and it suffices to reiterate that U.S. support for Tibet diminished substantially following the Nixon-Kissinger initiation of rapprochement with China in 1971. For the decade following detente, Tibet remained an obscure issue in U.S. foreign policy. Events in the 1980s, however, brought the Tibet Question to the forefront again. The Dalai Lama's international initiative garnered strong sympathy and support for Tibet in Congress, in the human rights community, and among citizens' lobbying groups, and was able to move the Tibet issue from the rarefied atmosphere of professional "foreign affairs" to the more visceral arena of internal U.S. politics.⁶² Consequently, there have been a variety of Congress-initiated actions in support of the Dalai Lama such as creation of a Voice of America (VOA) Tibetan language broadcast unit in 1990 and the passing of pro-Tibetan legislation such as the one cited earlier. This highly visible and emotional interest in Tibet has effectively exerted pressure on recent administrations (Reagan, Bush and Clinton) to increase overt government recognition of the Tibetan issue.

The inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993, in particular, began a major escalation of this trend. As part of his policy of giving high priority to human rights issues in foreign affairs, President Clinton openly criticized China's actions in Tibet. For example, when he announced on 28 May 1993 that the Secretary of State would not recommend Most Favored Nation (MFN) status in 1994 unless China made significant progress with respect to a series of human rights problem areas, he listed "protecting Tibet's distinctive religious and cultural heritage" as one of these areas. And six months later, when Mr. Clinton met Chinese Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin face to face in Seattle, he urged Jiang to improve cultural and religious freedom in Tibet and to open talks with the Dalai Lama.⁶³ The U.S., for the first time, appeared willing to use its muscle to force changes in Chinese policy toward Tibet. 1993, therefore, appeared a major turning point for

U.S.-Tibetan relations — if MFN was denied to China in part because of its policies in Tibet, the Tibetan exiles would have attained precisely the kind of new leverage they had been seeking.

However, as we know, that did not come to pass. U.S. policy shifted radically in 1994 when President Clinton changed his position and announced he would not use economic sanctions to try to force political changes in China, let alone Tibet. The Tibetan exiles were thrust back to square one. It was a painful lesson.

The U.S. post-MFN Asian policy has once again placed geo-political and economic interests ahead of human rights-democracy issues, and has steered away from a public, confrontational style. Consequently, although some involved with U.S. foreign policy still contend that assisting Tibet is a matter of principle and conscience — that Tibet is an important test of the U.S.'s will to take the lead in forging a new, more democratic, post-cold war world — the majority viewpoint disagrees. It holds that the U.S. has no strategic interest in Tibet and that the U.S. should do everything it can to avoid unnecessary complications and irritants in its China policy. In other words, nothing should be done to encourage either the Dalai Lama or Tibetans in Tibet to expect meaningful support from the United States in securing their political goals. A 1994 State Department report on Tibet prepared for the Congress conveys the new position that the best way to address friction points with China is to engage it in a positive sense:

The ability of the United States to promote respect for human rights by the Chinese authorities is closely related to the strength of our bilateral relations with China. A serious disruption of U.S.-China relations would gravely undermine any hope for the United States to foster greater respect for the human rights of ethnic Tibetans in China

The report also includes a very tough, anti-Dharamsala, statement of the U.S.'s position on the political status of Tibet *vis-a-vis* China.

Historically, the United States has acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Since at least 1966, U.S. policy has explicitly recognized the Tibetan Autonomous Region . . . as part of the People's Republic of China. This long-standing policy is consistent with the view of the entire international community, including all China's neighbors: no country recognizes Tibet as a

sovereign state. Because we do not recognize Tibet as an independent state, the United States does not conduct diplomatic relations with the self-styled "Tibetan government-in-exile."

The Clinton administration, therefore, is trying to use its influence in Beijing to quietly persuade China to open new talks with the Dalai Lama to resolve the conflict. But at the same time, it is restricting public comments critical of China regarding Tibet and is clearly working to prevent the Tibet Question from disturbing the more important economic and security dimensions of Sino-American relations. It appears willing, therefore, to urge both parties to resolve the conflict peacefully, to occasionally mention human rights violations in Tibet, and perhaps to privately encourage China to meet with the Dalai Lama for a new round of talks, but no more.

So long as one posits that the U.S. has no strategic interest in Tibet, this makes eminent sense. But that does not seem a reasonable assumption given that Tibetans are unlikely to permit Beijing to continue to implement its current policies with impunity for much longer. Consequently, although U.S. interests in the area are satisfied if the Sino-Tibetan conflict continues at its present level, i.e., if it does not degenerate into bloody violence, violence seems likely in the near future. Any shift to violence, moreover, would likely impact U.S. strategic interests negatively in important ways, for example:

1. *If it remained localized in Tibet* — Serious violence would likely result in a heavy-handed Chinese response that would create powerful pressures in the domestic political arena for the U.S. to support the Tibetans' struggle for freedom. Any such steps, of course, would be perceived in Beijing as a threat to Chinese core strategic interests and would worsen the already fragile relations between China and the United States, potentially complicating our entire Asia policy.

2. *If it did not remain isolated in Tibet* — Serious violence could impact on the internal stability of China itself. It might, for example, precipitate a chain of events that would destabilize China internally at this very important juncture in its history, or it might significantly exacerbate forces of disintegration that started elsewhere in China. One of Beijing's worst case scenarios, in fact, is for serious disturbances in Tibet to spread to other minority areas

such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and the Muslim (Hui) areas in Gansu.

Given that the exiles and their supporters see Soviet-like disintegration in China as their greatest hope, they are certain to leap in with alacrity at any sign of major economic or political instability during the leadership change in China with the aim of exacerbating and accelerating this instability. The precedent of the previous Dalai Lama, the 13th, looms large in the mind of all Tibetan leaders. When the Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, he successfully organized military action in Tibet from exile in India and, after expelling all Chinese officials and troops, initiated a golden period of (defacto) independence that lasted 40 years until the Chinese communist actions of 1950-51.

The United States, therefore, appears clearly to have a major, albeit negative, strategic interest in Tibet — namely, preventing the conflict from turning violent. Consequently, the current U.S. approach to Tibet is seriously flawed since it can neither bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict nor can it prevent the exiles (and/or Tibetans in Tibet) from launching a new tactic of large-scale violence. Even in the unlikely event that U.S. prodding persuades China to resume talks with the Dalai Lama and his leaders, since they appear unwilling to agree to a settlement that does not include political control in Tibet, this will be an empty exercise certain to fail. Such a failure, moreover, could actually be counter-productive by increasing the anger and frustration in Dharamsala (and Tibet) and thereby push the existing momentum further towards violence (which would likely include "terrorist" type attacks).

Of course, it can be argued that the Tibetans will not be able to organize and sustain a program of violent attacks against Chinese targets (and nationals), but it seems shortsighted for the United States to allow the situation to deteriorate to a state where this will be tested empirically. The current U.S. policy is flawed, therefore, because it is allowing a dangerously volatile situation to develop according to its own momentum when its most likely outcome is clearly not in its strategic interests. At the least, such a turn to violence could negatively affect Sino-American relations, and at the worse, it might precipitate or exacerbate centrifugal forces in China that would foster political chaos in that key Asian nation. It seems prudent, therefore, for the U.S. to reassess the role of Tibet in its China and Asia policy and *strive* in a quiet, non-public fashion to facilitate a speedy resolution of the conflict.

But is there a reasonable compromise solution that could meet the needs of both parties to this conflict, and if so, what would it entail?

In order to achieve success, a compromise solution would have to enhance the strategic and prestige needs of China while at the same time preserve a Tibet that is strongly Tibetan in identity — in language, culture and in demographic composition. Tibetans essentially desire a nationalistic settlement. That is to say, they want a Tibet in which the political and the ethnic unit are congruent. Tibet, according to this view, should be comprised predominately of Tibetans, should be governed by Tibetans using their own language, and should allow the free expression of Tibetan culture and religion. For Dharamsala, the optimum venue for this is independence or complete political autonomy (something like the Strasbourg proposal). However, as we have seen, these options are unacceptable to China and therefore do not represent a realistic common ground for creating a resolution of the problem.

Throughout this century Tibet's search for an acceptable political niche *vis-a-vis* its large and powerful neighbor has been ineffectual, and the current disparity in wealth and power makes their position weaker than ever before.⁶⁴ Tibetans may feel it is not fair to expect them to compromise on principle just because of the might of their opponent, and it is difficult not to sympathize with this, but history has dealt them a very poor hand and events in Tibet appear to be altering the situation at a rapid pace.

The key question regarding resolution, therefore, is whether it is possible to create a truly "ethnic" Tibet without changing the underlying communist political system. I think the answer is yes if both sides agree to a number of important concessions and work to set aside past hatred and distrust.

China, for its part, would have to make major concessions. In the political sphere, a "new" Tibet Autonomous Region would retain its current political system but Beijing would move in stages to appoint Tibetans to head all its party and government offices. The communist party would govern Tibet through Tibetan party members, but all positions of real power would be placed in the hands of ethnic Tibetans, e.g., the position of First Secretary of the Party would for the first time be given to a Tibetan. By the end of a ten-year phase-in period, the percent of Tibetan officials would increase substantially from its current 60-70% to as high as 85-90%.

In the cultural sphere, a variety of measures would have to be implemented to enhance the degree to which Tibetan culture predominates. One of the most critical of these would be to phase in Tibetan language as the basic operating language of government. Although all Tibetan officials would have to be bilingual in Chinese, and the education system would continue to teach Chinese along with Tibetan, restoring written Tibetan as the language of the government of Tibet would enable Tibetan culture to grow and modernize to a degree not possible now. A detailed plan for this reform was made during the period of 1987-88, and it could readily be activated. Other cultural measures, such as allowing the number of monks in monasteries to increase and permitting Buddhist clerics from abroad to give religious teachings, could be worked out by the parties.

Measures to decrease substantially the number of non-Tibetans in Tibet and to reduce outside economic competition so that Tibetans become the main beneficiaries of economic development in the TAR. The program of economic development would continue, but if need be at a slower rate and with prime consideration being given to the welfare of Tibetans. Since the overwhelming majority of non-Tibetans in Tibet are not legal residents (colonists), Beijing has no responsibility for their resettlement and re-employment, and could accomplish this, although not without difficulty.

The end result of such a process would be a Tibet that was predominately Tibetan in culture, language and demographic composition. It would continue to modernize and would be run by Tibetans, albeit by "communist" Tibetans. This kind of Tibet would probably meet with the approval of the overwhelming majority of Tibetans in Tibet if they felt external support was not forthcoming for something more. However, if China in time evolves more democratic institutions such as multiple political parties, the political leadership in Tibet would similarly broaden its base. The underlying premise of this compromise solution is that transforming Tibet into a "modern" society is perfectly compatible with preserving its rich language, culture and religion, and that it is in the interests of both sides to facilitate such a development.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to achieving such a solution is the exiles' demand for recreation of a "Greater Tibet." A possible solution to this impasse would be for Beijing to make parallel changes in policy in ethnographic Tibet and for both sides to agree to delay addressing the unification issue until the new program has been in operation for five or ten years. i.e., until new relations of trust and respect are established.

In the critical demographic and economic spheres, Beijing would have to take

Beijing, however, now considers, with considerable justification, that even an "ethnic" solution such as this would be a potential threat to its position in Tibet given the strong anti-Chinese and pro-separatist feelings of Tibetans. Consequently, to receive favorable consideration in China, a compromise plan such as this would have to include components that clearly enhanced Beijing's control over Tibet.

Only the Dalai Lama can provide this for Beijing, so he, rather than the exile government, is the key element in validating such a compromise. To win the above concessions from China, the Dalai Lama would have to agree to do two main things: (1) return to China/Tibet and publicly accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet; and (2) work actively to create cooperative and harmonious relations between Tibetans and non-Tibetans, persuading Tibetans in Lhasa to stop disturbances and accept that a truly Tibetan Tibet is not incompatible with being a part of China. He would, therefore, have to use his enormous prestige and stature to change the attitude of Tibetans (in Tibet) toward being part of China. His stature in Tibet is so great that he could certainly do that if he tried and if Beijing supported his efforts by promptly phasing in the changes outlined above. Once begun, it should be possible for such a process to be implemented over the course of a decade, even if most Tibetans in exile do not return.

However, this kind of compromise is unlikely to occur without external assistance. There is no consensus in the exile community about the advantages of such a political compromise, let alone about the exclusion of "ethnographic Tibet," so the Dalai Lama would very likely have to decide to pursue this course of action on his own, i.e., without the unified support of his government in exile. It would not be an easy decision, and as in the past his tendency will be to resist this. Similarly, in Beijing, the combination of an uncertain leadership situation and the apparent success of their current policy in Tibet, means there is very little motivation for change there. Put baldly, given the feeling in Beijing that Dharamsala is insincere and inherently "splittist," Beijing has little motivation to risk trusting it when it may be able to achieve its strategic goals without having to do so.

Consequently, if China and the Dalai Lama are left to their own means, a negotiated resolution of the conflict along the above lines is unlikely at present. There simply is too little trust and too many powerful reasons that make both sides reluctant to take a risk. If progress is to be made, therefore, a "catalyst-facilitator" is needed; this is where the United States could play a constructive role, either directly through private diplomacy, or through a proxy country such as Norway

or Mongolia. It would be injudicious to spell out publicly how this U.S. participation might occur, but suffice to say that given the low level of mutual trust, both sides would need assurances that the terms of such a compromise would be genuinely implemented. In particular, the Dalai Lama would need reassurance from the United States that should China renege on its commitments once he returned, the United States would take strong action, for example, accepting Tibet's right to be independent and launching a campaign to secure international acceptance of this. On the other hand, the United States would certainly have to assure Beijing privately that it will support the new arrangement vociferously regardless of what critics in the West say.

Moving in this direction would entail some risk for the United States given China's extreme sensitivity to outside intervention in its internal affairs, and because Congressional critics might well accuse the administration of selling out the Dalai Lama to the communists, but if done discreetly, and with the genuine agreement of the Dalai Lama, these risks can be minimized. In any case, the potential benefit to U.S. national interests far outweighs the political risks. Such a strategy, moreover, if successful, would also fulfill U.S. humanitarian interests by assisting Tibetans to preserve Tibet as a true cultural and ethnic homeland.

In conclusion, the Tibet Question has currently reached a dangerous turning point. The Chinese are pursuing a policy that the Dalai Lama knows is changing Tibet, perhaps irretrievably, and that the situation will only worsen in time. Although the dominant view in Beijing is that this policy serves the long-term interests of the People's Republic of China, it is obvious to many in China that a policy that creates anger, enmity, demonstrations and violence among Tibetans is not really creating the long-term security and goodwill China wants. If Tibetans and Chinese are ever to reach a secure and meaningful rapprochement, at the very least, Tibetans' deep-seated ethnic sensitivities must be addressed.

The Dalai Lama is central to such a compromise resolution. At age 60, he must be thinking about how best to preserve his people and their way of life in his remaining years. His predecessor, the 13th Dalai Lama, made a disastrous decision in the 1920s when under pressure from conservatives he dismantled the officer corps and the core of the modernization program. The 14th Dalai Lama now stands at another such crossroads contemplating how to protect a "Tibetan" Tibet for future generations of Tibetans. He may decide to continue to sit on the sidelines, hoping that external forces will destroy his enemy, but it is more likely that he will soon feel compelled to adopt a proactive approach — either moving

to preserve Tibet by accepting a major compromise such as that outlined above, or more likely by tacitly and reluctantly accepting a new tactic of countering Chinese policies in Tibet through organized violence. It seems clearly in the interests of the United States to develop a strategy that will ensure that he and his leaders choose the former over the latter.

Endnotes

- 1 This definition of nationalism derives from Gellner, E. Nations and Nationalism. Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 1.
- 2 This dichotomy is reflected in the United Nations Charter which states in Article 1, section 2, that the purpose of the U.N. is to ensure "friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination" but at the same time also states in Article 2, section 7, that "nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state..." (Moynihan, D.P. Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics. Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 66, p. 150)
- 3 Richardson, a former British/Indian official who was stationed in Lhasa writes: "There [in political Tibet] Tibetan governments have ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east, ...is its 'ethnographic' extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area 'political' Tibet exercised jurisdiction only in certain places and at irregular intervals; for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of varying size." (Richardson, H.E. Tibet and its History. Shambhala Publications, 1984, p. 1).
- 4 This convention is non-judgmental. It does not imply that these areas historically were not part of the Tibetan state, nor that they should not become part of such a political entity in the future. Nor does it imply that these areas were part of China, for in many, if not most cases, there were basically autonomous. For a more detailed comment on this contentious issue see Goldstein, M. C. "Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A case study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990." In. Barnett, R and Akiner, S. (eds.) Pp. 76-111. Resistance and Reform in Tibet. Hurst & Co. 1994. See also Samuel. G. Civilized Shamans. The Smithsonian Press. 1993 (especially Part One).
- 5 The Western (Dzungar) and Eastern (Khalkha) Mongols.
- 6 For more details on this period see: Goldstein M. C. A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951. U. of California Press, 1989; Lamb, H.A. The McMahon Line, 1904-1914, Routledge, 1966; Richardson, op. cit., Ya, Hanzhang. The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas. Foreign Languages Press, 1991.
- 7 Goldstein, Ibid., pp. 68-70.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 71-73.
- 9 The full letter said: "Your HOLINESS: Two of my fellow countrymen, Iliia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan, hope to visit your Pontificate and the historic and widely famed city of Lhasa. There are in the United States of America many persons, among them myself, who, long and greatly interested in your land and people, would highly value such an opportunity.

As you know, the people of the United States, in association with those of twenty-seven other countries, are now engaged in a war which has been thrust upon the world by nations bent on conquest who are intent on destroying freedom of thought, of religion,

and of action everywhere. The United Nations are fighting today in defense of and for preservation of freedom, confident that we shall be victorious because our cause is just, our capacity is adequate, and our determination is unshakable.

I am asking Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan to convey to you a little gift in token of my friendly sentiment toward you. With cordial greetings. (cited in Goldstein., op cit., p. 392.).

- 10 Woodrow Wilson, for example, on 11 February 1918 told a Joint Session of Congress that, "National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril." (cited in Moynihan, op. cit., pp. 78-79.).
- 11 In August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill stated that, "They respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live." (Ibid., p. 93).
- 12 Apropos the controversy over whether "ethnographic Tibet" was actually part of political Tibet in 1949, this letter indicates clearly that the then government of Tibet understood that these areas were not under their control so did not feel that it had been invaded when the communists "liberated" them in 1949.
- 13 Goldstein op. cit., p. 625.
- 14 Ibid., p. 626.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 628-629.
- 16 Ibid., p. 630. By contrast, President Truman ordered the U.S. 7th fleet to begin patrolling the Taiwan Straits in June 1950 to overtly show the U.S. commitment to the security of Taiwan. (Harding, H. The United States and China since 1972. 1992).
- 17 In 1949-50, China was divided (by the Chinese communists) into four large Military-Civil Bureaus. These were charged with operating newly liberated areas until a time when "people's governments" could be established. The S.W. Bureau was in charge of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Tibet.
- 18 Goldstein, op. cit., p. 715.
- 19 So did the United States.
- 20 India also argued that it feared bringing up the Tibet issue at that time would hurt its efforts to achieve a cease-fire in Korea.
- 21 Claims that this agreement is invalid since it was signed under duress are misleading. Certainly the Tibetans did not want to sign a treaty acknowledging Chinese sovereignty, but like many defeated countries had little choice. The Chinese negotiators on several occasions made threats to continue the invasion into Central Tibet if certain points were not accepted, but the Tibetan negotiators were *never themselves physically threatened* and were free to refuse to sign an agreement right up to the end. Similarly, the common charge that the seal of the Tibetan Government was forged by the Chinese is incorrect. The Chinese made only personal seals for each of the Tibetan delegates and these are

- what they used to sign the agreement. See Goldstein op. cit. Chapter 20, for a detailed discussion of this agreement.
- 22 Point 11 stated: "In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The local government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet." (cited in Goldstein op. cit., pp. 766-68.).
- 23 The development of U.S. involvement is discussed in detail in *Ibid.*, p. 763 ff.
- 24 Dalai Lama, interview.
- 25 It is interesting to note that this was taking place while Mao was turning more leftist in China proper, launching the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 and the Great Leap Forward in 1958.
- 26 Immediately after the 1959 uprising, monasteries were classified according to whether they were involved in the uprising or not. In those so designated, most monks were either sent home or sent to work units (as laymen). A few monasteries not involved in the uprising such as Tashilhunpo, the seat of the Panchen Lama, continued to function as monasteries until the Cultural Revolution. In other important monasteries, a small number of monks were permitted to remain to look after their possessions, etc. The well known destruction of monastic buildings, books, statues and so forth mainly occurred a few years later during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-67.
- 27 It should be remembered that Deng Xiaoping was intimately involved in the Tibet Question. From 1949-1955 he was Political Commissar of the SW Bureau in Qongqing (which was in charge of the 1950 invasion and administration of Tibet). He then moved to Beijing in 1955 where he served as General Secretary of the Party.
- 28 International Commission of Jurists. The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law. Geneva, 1959, p. iv.
- 29 Public Records Office (FO371 150710), 20 Feb. 1960 reply of Christian A. Herter to Dalai Lama.
- 30 U.N. Resolution 1723 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 as cited in Van Pragg, M. The Status of Tibet. Westview Press, 1987.
- 31 And presumably, an indeterminate number of Tibetans in Tibet.
- 32 See Goldstein, M.C. and Beall, C.M. Nomads of Western Tibet: The Survival of a Way of Life. U. of California Press., 1990, pp. 40-46.
- 33 Tibetan Review, June 1978, p. 4.; Feb. 1979, p. 9ff.; Feb 1989, p. 9. Deng Xiaoping had also raised the Tibetan Question on 28 December 1978 when he responded to U.S. newspapermen that "the Dalai Lama may return, but only as a citizen of China." And, "we have but one demand—patriotism. And we say that anyone is welcome, whether he embraces patriotism early or late." ... Deng added that even though the Dalai Lama disliked the government in the past, if he now likes it, the past is irrelevant. (Ren min

- Ribau (People's Daily, Beijing edition), "White Paper," 9/24/92).
- 34 From the "Report of the National United Front Work Conference," 23 January 1982, (Minzu zhengce wenxuan, Selected Documents of Nationality Policy. Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1985, p. 10), as cited in Sharlho, T W. "China's Reforms in Tibet: Issues and Dilemmas." The J. of Contemporary China. 1 (1): 38, 1992).
- 35 National here refers to nationality or ethnic.
- 36 Summary of World Broadcasts. 30 May 1980 (NCNA in Chinese).
- 37 In China there are no "nationality" communist parties. Consequently, the communist party in Tibet is part of the one undivided Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and is subordinate to its policies.
- 38 It should be noted that the Han cadre withdrawal policy ran into many obstacles in Tibet because disapproving "leftist" cadre dragged their feet in implementation and because many of these Han cadre decided it was in their economic well-being to remain in Tibet. Generally, the Chinese officials with special skills such as doctors, scientists and so forth were eager to leave because they had no trouble finding suitable work, but those without such skills quickly found that they were worse off in internal China. The Central Government had stipulated that their home province had to accept them, but had not stipulated that this acceptance would be at the same salary and with equivalent the perks as they received in Tibet. These officials also had their families with them in Lhasa, most of whom were earning income. When they came to realize that returning to inland China would mean a drop in their standard of living, a large number protested and insisted that the salary/perks issue be decided in advance, i.e. before they left Tibet. The combination of these issues resulted in the withdrawal policy never being fully implemented. In fact, it probably had the unintended consequence of having the best, most skilled cadre leave and the least skilled remain.
- 39 News Tibet. September-December, 1993, p. 7.; and a ms., Office of Tibet (emphasis added).
- 40 Beijing Review. 49 (5): 10, 1984.
- 41 Tibetan Review. May 1983, p. 5.
- 42 Letter from Dalai Lama to Jiang Zemin, 11 September 1992. (Office of Tibet, N.Y.C.).
- 43 In October 1982, e.g., the Office of Tibet in NYC submitted a 14 page document on "Chinese Human Rights Abuses in Tibet: 1959-1982."
- 44 One Tibetan scholar has written that the exiles raised these points at the 1982 meeting but that appears to be incorrect (Dawa Norbu. "China's Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1987-90: Pre-negotiation State or Dead End?" Pacific Affairs. 64 (3) 1991).
- 45 The new strategy was finalized, it appears, after a series of high-level meetings between key Tibetan and Western supporters in New York, Washington and London in 1986/87. The history of these developments have not yet been well documented and details are still sparse.

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- 46 In fact, he first visited the U.S. only in 1979, having previously been denied a visa for ten years (Grunfeld, T A.. "The internationalization of Tibet." unpublished manuscript).
- 47 News Tibet. 22 (3) May August 1988, p. 8. The exile Tibetans had received their first explicit support from the U.S. Congress in July, 1985 when 91 Congressmen signed a letter to Li Xiannian, President of the PRC, expressing support for continued direct talks and urging the Chinese to "grant the very reasonable and justified aspirations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his people every consideration." (Point 14 of Section 1243 of Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 cited in Congressional Ceremony to Welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, U.S. Government Printing Office 1992).
- 48 The talk used "Greater Tibet" as the referent for "Tibet."
- 49 Ibid., p. 96.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Much of this and the next section was adapted from Goldstein, M. "The Snow Lion and the Dragon." In Kane, T (ed.) China Briefing 1990. Westview Press, 1990.
- 52 All but one of these were eventually released before the Prayer Festival started.
- 53 Other accounts of these events are found in Sharlho, op. cit., and Schwartz, R.D. Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising. Columbia U. Press, 1994.
- 54 It was strongly criticized, for example, by the Tibetan Youth Congress, the European Tibetan Youth Association and the elder brother of the Dalai Lama, Thupten Norbu. The latter sent a letter to Tibetans throughout the world attacking his brother's decision to relinquish the goal of independence.
- 55 International Campaign for Tibet, 2/11/1994.
- 56 They are, therefore, coming not on orders from Beijing but because there are lucrative jobs to be had and money to be earned.
- 57 One is reminded of the difficulties indigenous populations in Malaysia and Indonesia faced trying to compete with Chinese.
- 58 This is somewhat surprising given that Beijing has not permitted the kind of laissez faire economic competition that is allowed in Tibet to develop between Chinese and the industrial world.
- 59 Since Beijing does not have to worry about votes for its policy in Tibet, this is not a constituency in the normal Western sense. It resembles more the "facts on the ground" type of constituency that Israel uses on the West Bank, although these "facts" do not have citizenship in Tibet.
- 60 The very fact that Tibetan cadre were doing this illustrates the magnitude of Beijing's problem.

- 61 The first "official" U.S.-Tibet contact appears to have taken place in 1908 when W.W. Rockhill, President T. Roosevelt's envoy to China, met the 13th Dalai Lama. (see Rowland, W. "American Diplomacy and the God King." Foreign Service Journal. February 1967, pp. 36-37.)
- 62 Most of the support groups appear to have developed as an outgrowth of the first riots in Lhasa in 1987/88 (see Meg McLaren. "Computing for Tibet. Virtual politics in the post-cold war era." In Marcus, G. (ed.) Late Editions, vol. 3. U. of Chicago Press (forthcoming)).
- 63 Herald Tribune. p.1., 22 November, 1993.
- 64 One is reminded of the fates of three other "Tibetan areas"ÑSikkim, Ladakh and BhutanÑall of whom, with different degrees of success, had to accommodate to the interests of their powerful neighbor, India.

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