



A Reply to China's White Paper on Tibet

By Warren Smith

In October 2013, China published its eighth White Paper on Tibet. China's State Council White Papers are the highest level official publications of the PRC and a major part of its international propaganda. China has published more White Papers on Tibet than on any other subject. The typical themes of China's White Papers are that Tibet has always been a part of China, that there is no issue of Tibet's political status—only a social issue of Tibet's peaceful liberation from feudal serfdom—and that Tibet has developed socially and economically due to China's assistance. China's new White Paper on Tibet emphasizes these typical themes and states that China's policy in Tibet is correct and unalterable.

The foreword of the White Paper summarizes its themes. The first sentence states that Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times. This means that China claims that there is no issue of Tibetan independence or self-determination or any question about the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet because Tibet has always been a part of China. This statement implies that even Tibetans do not dispute that Tibet was always a part of China. However, the reality is far from what China claims. Even China does not maintain that Tibet was a part of China during the Tibetan Empire and Tang Dynasty period. Therefore, Tibet was once a country separate from China.

China now claims that Tibet became a part of China during the Yuan dynasty of the 13th century. However, in the context of Chinese history that date is hardly ancient. Also, the Yuan was a Mongol conquest dynasty, or actually an empire that included both Tibet and China and many other territories. The history of China's intermittent and superficial relationship with Tibet hardly qualifies to define Tibet as an integral part of China. In addition, Tibetans never considered themselves as Chinese or thought of Tibet as a part of China and they made every effort to remain independent of China. China achieved control over Tibet only in 1951, and only by force, against the wishes of Tibetans.

The White Paper says that before “liberation” by the CCP Tibet was a society of feudal serfdom that was as dark and backward as medieval Europe. This is simply an attempt to justify Chinese rule over Tibet on the theory that Tibetans were unable to rule themselves. This is the typical justification used by imperialists and colonialists worldwide throughout all periods of history. In addition, the characterization of traditional Tibet as backward and feudal is exaggerated for the purpose of justifying the Chinese conquest of Tibet. Tibetan society was feudal in the sense that the government governed by indirect rule of feudal estates, but that was typical of many societies in that stage of political development. The feudal nature of Tibetan society is hardly a sufficient justification for the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet.

The White Paper says that China's so-called peaceful liberation and the subsequent democratic reforms introduced modern civilization into Tibet and allowed Tibetans to control their own destiny for the first time in their history. However, the truth is the opposite. The Chinese invasion meant the end of Tibetan independence and Tibetans' freedom to determine their own fate. China's so-called peaceful liberation was neither peaceful nor was it a liberation. China's claim implies that Tibetans were liberated from themselves, which is true in the sense that they were deprived of their own government.

China also claims that the democratic reform campaign was done by Tibetans themselves, but in fact it was imposed upon them by the Chinese and it meant the loss of all their personal freedoms. Tibetans did not gain self-rule by means of democratic reforms and the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. In fact it was by these means that China established its complete control over Tibet and the lives of Tibetans. China claims that Tibetans are eternally grateful to China and the CCP for their liberation and that they are now happy, prosperous and loyal citizens of China. However, China has not and would never allow Tibetans to determine for themselves whether or not they wish to be a part of China. Despite its claims that Tibetans are content to be a part of China, Tibetans are not allowed any right to self-determination as required by international law.

The foreword of China's new White Paper on Tibet claims that Tibet's inclusion within China is natural and inevitable according to the rules of history. China has long claimed that the merging of nationalities is natural and inevitable. However, the history of China is one of expanding territory at the expense of non-Chinese nationalities that have been assimilated by force. The inclusion of Tibet within the PRC was not natural or inevitable or even voluntary. It was achieved only by force against active and continuing Tibetan resistance. It does not reflect the aspiration or wishes of Tibetans but rather is contrary to those wishes. It reflects not Tibetans' wishes but rather China's ambition to control and exploit Tibet. China's control over Tibet is neither natural nor inevitable, but rather is the result of Chinese imperialism against Tibet.

The title of the first section of the White Paper is "The Development and Progress in Tibet is the Inevitable Result of History." This favorite theme of Chinese propaganda about Tibet is based upon the theory that the merging of nationalities is natural and inevitable and that the merging of China with Tibet is similarly part of the natural and inevitable progress of history. This theory is derived from Marxist doctrine about stages of history through which society progresses naturally until it reaches socialism or communism. China thus attempts to define its conquest of Tibet as a natural and inevitable development of history rather than imperialist aggression by China against Tibet. China would prefer to talk only about how much Tibet has developed under its rule rather than about how it incorporated Tibet against the will of Tibetans. However, for Tibetans the issue is still about the lack of legitimacy of Chinese rule over the non-Chinese Tibetans.

The White Paper repeats the usual claim that Tibet was a society of feudal serfdom characterized by inequality, injustice and lack of any social or economic development. It claims that the development and progress of Tibet began only after the elimination of Tibet's traditional social and political system. It cites a few descriptions of old Tibet that portray Tibetan society as dark and backward, with the implication that traditional Tibetan society was so stagnant that it could never have developed or progressed without outside intervention by China.

China prefers to talk about how backward Tibet was before its so-called liberation because this is one of China's primary justifications for imposing its rule over Tibet. However, this is the same argument that every colonialist in world history has used to justify their conquests. Tibetan society could have developed and progressed, perhaps with outside influence and assistance, even from China, but outside interference and control was not necessary. Tibet could surely have developed without Chinese political control and, indeed, Chinese rule over Tibet has resulted in far more injustice and abuses of human rights than anything the Chinese can plausibly claim about old Tibet.

China's White Paper claims that Tibet's development and progress began only with its so-called liberation in 1951 and the institution of the so-called democratic reforms after the 1959 revolt. It claims that Tibetans themselves promoted democratic reforms that liberated a million serfs and slaves and allowed Tibetans to enjoy basic human rights, equality and freedom for the first time in their history. The failure of the revolt, the abolishment of the Tibetan Government and the subsequent democratic reforms supposedly established the necessary economic, political and social conditions for Tibet's future development and progress.

The creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965 theoretically established Tibetan self-rule and made Tibetans the masters of their own fate for the first time in their history. China claims that all of these developments were done by Tibetans themselves and were natural and inevitable according to the laws of the progression of history. China claims that Tibet was able to progress from feudal society to modern civilization in a very short period of time due to China's assistance. Tibet's development and progress has supposedly benefitted Tibetans and has resulted in a continuous increase in their individual and collective freedoms.

Despite the claims of China's new White Paper, all of these changes in Tibet's social and political system were done not voluntarily by Tibetans but by the Chinese and they benefitted the Chinese far more than Tibetans. There may have been inequalities in old Tibetan society, but at least Tibetans ruled themselves. China's so-called liberation of Tibet was nothing but a military conquest. The dissolution of the Tibetan Government after the 1959 revolt deprived Tibetans of their own government. China's so-called democratic reforms increased Chinese control over the lives of Tibetans. The creation of the TAR in 1965 established total Chinese control over all aspects of their lives and eliminated any semblance of Tibetan self-rule. China's claims about the development and progress of Tibet are an attempt to change the subject from the real issue of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet.

China claims that Tibet could never have developed except for Chinese assistance. However, any Tibetan might ask why Chinese assistance required Chinese control over Tibet. If China's only interest in Tibet was to assist the development of Tibet, then why could China not have done so by means of Chinese foreign economic aid to an independent Tibet?

The title of the second section of the White Paper is "Economic Growth and Improvement of the People's Livelihood." The theme of this section is that economic development, especially in a poor country where people previously had no economic security, is more important than individual human rights of a political nature, like democracy and freedom of the press and media. China claims that it has improved the human rights of the Chinese people, including Tibetans, by improving their economic conditions, and that this is more important than individual human rights. China claims that its assistance has helped Tibet develop economically and that this has improved Tibetans' living conditions and thus their collective human rights. China maintains that this is more important than any other sort of human rights and that economic development justifies whatever repression of dissent or limiting of individual rights has been necessary to achieve economic development.

The Chinese White Paper on Tibet provides a multitude of statistics to prove that Tibet has developed economically under Chinese administration. It claims that economic development has produced substantial improvements in Tibetans' lives and their living standards. It cites the infrastructure improvements such as roads, electricity, communications and housing done with Chinese government assistance, including the building of new housing for farmers and herdsman. It also says that many Tibetans now have televisions, refrigerators, telephones, computers, washing machines, automobiles, motorcycles and other consumer goods.

The White Paper contrasts the situation in old Tibet, where there was little economic development, with the current situation where there is much greater development and more economic prosperity for the Tibetan people. It cites the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, industrial enterprises, mining and tourism. It also mentions hydroelectric development, aviation, urbanization, foreign trade and the building of the railroad to Tibet as improvements that have benefitted the lives of Tibetans. The White Paper implies that all of these developments have come only after the liberation of Tibet and could not have happened under the old political system in Tibet.

The Chinese Communist Party has focused on economic development as the most important human right, even if other more individual and political rights have to be neglected. It has justified its rule over Tibet primarily on the economic argument. However, economic assistance did not require Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and is no justification for it. China has exploited Tibet for its natural resources. Much of China's infrastructure development in Tibet is for the purpose of military control and resource exploitation.

China at first exploited Tibet's forest resources. Then it concentrated on hydroelectric development, which is less to provide electricity to Tibetans than to provide power for large mining operations and for export to the Chinese interior. China's exploitation of the mineral resources of Tibet has been small scale so far but may soon become far larger. China allows state-owned enterprises to ignore environmental regulations and the welfare of Tibetans whose lands are taken for mines or whose lands and waters are polluted. The large scale mining of Tibet planned in the future is almost solely for the benefit of China while Tibetans will have to suffer the environmental consequences.

China's economic development has vastly increased the numbers of Chinese in Tibet. Tibetans have been marginalized by economic development in Tibet because Chinese officials and entrepreneurs prefer to give jobs to fellow Chinese rather than to Tibetans. Tibetan nomads have been deprived of their pastures and their livelihood when they are moved into new housing. Even Chinese tourism to Tibet benefits Chinese more than Tibetans because Chinese tourists prefer Chinese guides, Chinese hotels and Chinese restaurants. They are also subjected to cultural propaganda that denigrates Tibetan culture and exaggerates the Chinese historical role in Tibet and the development of Tibetan culture.

Chinese economic development in Tibet may have improved the lives of Tibetans somewhat but it has helped Chinese in Tibet more than Tibetans and it is aimed at helping China more than Tibet. Ultimately, the economic development in Tibet is no justification for Chinese control over Tibet or the abuses of Tibetans' human rights including the fundamental right of self-determination.]

The title of the third section of the White Paper is "Political Progress—The People Are the Masters of Their Own Fate." The theme of this section is that Tibet's old theocratic system and feudal serfdom was replaced with democratic reforms and regional ethnic autonomy by means of which Tibetans have become the masters of their own fate. The system of people's congresses in the PRC is said to be the means by which the people exercise state power through the National People's Congress and local people's congresses.

This system was established in Tibet with the creation of the TAR in 1965. After this time the Tibetan people were supposedly able to make decisions affecting their own region by electing representatives to the regional people's congress and local people's congresses. Tibetans and other ethnic minorities are the majority of the representatives in the people's congresses in the TAR.

The White Paper says that the establishment of the Tibetan People's Congresses followed the liberation of Tibet, the emancipation of the serfs after the 1959 revolt and democratic reforms, all of which were done by the Tibetan people themselves with the assistance of the central government. Tibetans have thus become masters of their own fate with China's assistance, which implies that they were previously not masters of their own affairs and their own fate and could not have become so without China's help.

Under the system of regional ethnic autonomy and people's congresses, Tibetans supposedly exercise their right to autonomy in regard to local issues such as language, culture, education and local economy. They theoretically have the right to modify national laws to suit local conditions. The regional ethnic autonomy system also supposedly promotes equal relations between Han Chinese and Tibetans as well as between Tibetans and other ethnic minorities in Tibet. Class differences have also theoretically been eliminated so that all Chinese citizens in Tibet enjoy equal status. Tibetans theoretically benefit from social, economic and political relations with other Chinese provinces and are able to live in any other province where they please.

The claim that Chinese rule has allowed Tibetans to be the masters of their own fate is contradicted by the fact that it is China that rules Tibet. China makes much propaganda about how the abuses of the old Tibetan social system disqualified Tibetans from ruling themselves and required China to impose its rule over Tibet. China uses Tibet's former self-rule, or the exaggerated abuses of self-rule, as a justification for China's right to rule Tibet. China then makes more propaganda about how China has restored Tibetan self-rule under Chinese rule.

However, this argument is self-contradictory. China's invasion and occupation of Tibet and its dissolution of the legitimate Tibetan Government is the opposite of Tibetan self-rule. It is the replacement of the former legitimate Tibetan self-rule with Chinese rule that allows Tibetans no say in their own affairs. Chinese rule is justified with a lot of propaganda about how Tibetans actually control their own affairs.

China's invasion and occupation of a previously independent Tibet was not liberation of Tibet. It was a Chinese conquest of Tibet. China eliminated the legitimate Tibetan Government in 1959 and instituted direct and total Chinese rule over Tibetans. Tibet's former serfs became serfs to the Chinese, as did all Tibetans. Tibetans were persecuted for any opposition to Chinese rule. The so-called democratic reforms served to identify and repress Tibetan opposition. The creation of the TAR in 1965 allowed China to claim that Tibet had autonomy when in reality Tibetans had less freedom than at any time before or after. The Cultural Revolution in Tibet saw the destruction of Tibetan culture, religion and historical monuments due to hysterical Chinese political campaigns that had nothing to do with Tibet.

China allowed some autonomy in Tibet in the 1980s but terminated many of those rights when they led to a revival of Tibetan religion, culture and nationalism. Currently, Tibetans have little if any autonomy because China fears that any autonomy in Tibet will foster Tibetan separatism. Tibetans are subjected to patriotic education campaigns in order to eliminate their cultural and religious traditions and their loyalty to the Dalai Lama. China's current policy in Tibet aims at the elimination of Tibetan separatism by means of economic development, cultural and political repression and colonization. The White Paper cites the right of Tibetans to move to other provinces only in order to justify the migration of large numbers of Chinese to Tibet. China's propaganda cannot alter the fact that it is China that rules Tibet, not Tibetans.

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The title of the fourth section of the White Paper is "Cultural Preservation and Freedom of Religious Belief." The theme of this section is that traditional Tibetan culture, which is said to be a part of Chinese culture, has been promoted and preserved by the Chinese Government along with its promotion of modern socialist culture. The White Paper claims that China has protected and preserved Tibetan language, cultural relics and historical sites, cultural traditions and religion.

The White Paper says that the Tibetan language is protected by law in China. Tibetans theoretically have the freedom to use and develop their own language. Schools in Tibet are supposed to use both Tibetan and Chinese languages. Tibetan is also supposed to be used as an administrative language in Tibet. There are Tibetan language books and newspapers as well as other media, including radio and television. The Internet is available in Tibetan. However, the White Paper also states that the Chinese language is used in Tibet and taught in schools in order to promote economic and cultural exchanges between ethnic groups. It says that the use of the Chinese language is intended to maintain state sovereignty and national unity while promoting cultural progress.

No one is allowed to oppose the popularization, study and use of the Chinese language on the pretext of protecting the Tibetan language and script. This last sentence reveals the emphasis that is placed on the use of the Chinese language as a means to promote cultural assimilation and national unity. In reality, Tibetan is not emphasized in schools nor is it used as the primary administrative language. Tibetans who do not speak Chinese are discriminated against in many ways.

The White Paper says that China has preserved Tibetan cultural relics and historical sites. It cites China's laws in regard to cultural protection and cultural relics and the preservation of the Potala, Jokhang and a few other places, as well as the funding that China has given to Tibet for this purpose. However, there is no mention of the tremendous destruction of Tibetan cultural relics and sites after the 1959 revolt and continuing through the Cultural Revolution. Not only

were most Tibetan monasteries destroyed but their contents were looted by the Chinese state for its own profit.

For China to claim that it has preserved Tibetan culture is totally false and hypocritical, given that China destroyed many if not most Tibetan historical sites, looted or destroyed cultural relics and repressed Tibetan culture for many years before deciding to try to preserve what little was left and to claim credit for doing so. The White Paper claims credit for promoting Tibetan dance and drama without mention of how their contents have been altered and how they have been exploited to claim that these superficial aspects of Tibetan culture represent Chinese preservation of all aspects of Tibetan culture.

The Chinese White Paper claims that Tibetans have the right to live according to their own traditional customs and religion and to take part in their own religious and cultural festivals. However, it does not mention that Tibetan cadres are not allowed to participate in religious activities or that any Tibetan who displays any sympathy for the Dalai Lama or a Tibetan flag at any cultural festival can be prosecuted. In addition, cultural festivals are sometimes cancelled without explanation if the authorities fear that Tibetans might use the occasion for political protests. The White Paper says that Tibetans have access to cultural programs on radio and television without mentioning that those media are dominated by Chinese propaganda. Typical of Chinese cultural promotion in Tibet is the Wencheng drama performances for Chinese tourists that portray Tibet as having been a part of China even during the Tibetan Empire period.

Finally, the White Paper claims that Buddhism is flourishing in Tibet because of the freedom of religion as well as state patronage for religious institutions. But it does not mention that monks are subjected to patriotic education and political supervision within their monasteries. It says that reincarnations are allowed to be found, but recognition has to come from the government rather than the Dalai Lama.

There is of course no mention of China's repression of Tibetan Buddhism or its vast destruction of Tibetan monasteries and religious books and relics in the past. The Chinese White Paper pretends that China has preserved and promoted Tibetan religion and culture, while every Tibetan knows that China is guilty of tremendous cultural destruction in Tibet in the past and that even now cultural activities are highly restricted and are not allowed to have any Tibetan national or political content or associations.

The title of the fifth section of the White Paper is "Social Changes and Development of All Undertakings." The theme of this section is that Tibet has made the transition from a traditional society to a modern one. Tibetans' rights to education, employment, health and social security have been further protected, and all social undertakings are thriving. The Chinese White Paper implies that none of this could have been done without the assistance of the CCP and without Tibet being a part of the PRC.

The White Paper claims that science and education have achieved rapid development. It says that before its peaceful liberation in 1951, Tibet had no scientific research in the modern sense except in the areas of Tibetan medicine, astronomy and the calendar. Now, Tibet has many state-owned and private scientific research institutes, including agricultural and animal husbandry research institutes. Tibet has thousands of technical professionals, of whom the majority are said to be Tibetan or other minority nationalities. The White Paper says that before the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the educated were mostly aristocrats, while serfs and slaves, accounting for 95 percent of the total population, had no right to education at all.

Now, Tibet has established a modern education system covering pre-school, basic education, vocational education, higher education, adult education and special education. China implies that none of this could have been done without its assistance. However, what the White Paper does not say is that this assistance could have been given as foreign aid to an independent Tibet. None of this development requires that Tibet be a part of China. China implies that Tibetans could never have changed their social system or achieved any progress in science and development, but this is illogical. Tibetans were surely capable of achieving all of this on their own.

The Chinese White Paper says that China has financed the education of thousands of Tibetans in the interior and has provided 15 years of free education for all Tibetan school children. The number of schools as well as of students has vastly increased. However, the White Paper says nothing about the anti-Tibetan content of much of that education, a primary goal of which is to replace Tibetan culture with Chinese culture. The education that Tibetans are subjected to in Chinese schools is aimed at their assimilation to Chinese culture, whereas if Tibetans had been able to develop their own school system they could have been taught in the Tibetan language and have preserved their own culture.

The White Paper says that China has done much to provide for Tibetans' employment by creating industries and providing jobs. However, it says nothing about how China destroyed Tibetan handicrafts and most other means of private employment after the 1959 revolt and during the Cultural Revolution. At that time, Tibetans could be employed only by the state and were organized into communes and had to give up most of their produce to the state. China eventually had to abandon the communes because of the failure of the communist economic system. Tibetans suffered due to Chinese state control and have only recently begun to recover.

Nevertheless, even now, Han Chinese in Tibet are given preference and have more employment opportunities in Tibet than do Tibetans. Tibetans who speak only their own language have few employment opportunities in an economy dominated by the Chinese and the Chinese state.

The White Paper says that Tibetans' health has improved and the population has consequently increased. The Chinese state has undeniably helped improve medical facilities in Tibet, but this could also have been done as foreign aid. The Tibetan population has increased only recently. The White Paper of course says nothing about how many Tibetans were killed during the revolt

or after due to being worked and starved to death in Chinese prisons and labor camps. It says nothing about the thousands of Tibetans who died due to starvation during the Great Leap Forward due to Mao's misguided economic policies.

The White Paper says that Tibetans now have some social security, including unemployment, disability and medical insurance and pensions for former government workers and even for monks and nuns. Pensions for former government workers and monks and nuns are indeed generous, but they are primarily aimed at buying the loyalty of those Tibetans. Tibetans who are receiving state subsidies are unlikely to jeopardize those pensions by protesting against the government. In essence, all of China's assistance to Tibet has political motives, but none of it justifies Chinese political control over Tibet.

The title of the sixth section of the White Paper is "Environmental Protection and Ecological Improvement." The theme of this section is that China has made great efforts to protect and preserve the environment in Tibet and has been very successful in doing so, with the Tibetan environment remaining one of the most pristine in the world. It does acknowledge some negative effects due to climate change, particularly the melting of glaciers and thawing of permafrost.

One positive effect of global warming has been an increase in the agricultural growing season of an average of ten days per year. This has resulted in the Tibetan Plateau absorbing more carbon dioxide, thus having a positive effect on the global climate. However, this effect has been uneven, with southern Tibet receiving less rainfall, thus hindering the growth of vegetation and agriculture, and northern Tibet having increased rainfall, thus improving grassland vegetation. The White Paper says that increased rainfall, plus the removal of human populations, has solved the problem of degradation of grasslands in some areas. However, it makes no mention of the consequent hardship for the Tibetan nomads who were removed from their pastures and whose lifestyles were negatively affected as a result.

The White Paper cites the formulation of many plans and regulations for ecological improvement. Tibet (TAR) has also established a total of 47 nature reserves, covering a third of the total land area, and wildlife has been protected and several endangered species have increased their numbers. Forests and grasslands have been protected, with cutting of forests being prohibited in some areas and reforestation projects being established in others. Grasslands have been protected, mostly by removing human populations. Water and soil conservation efforts have been launched, including efforts to prevent landslides, the White Paper says, without mentioning the landslide caused by mining activities at the Gyama mine near Lhasa. Tibet has also developed renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power and biogas. It claims that drinking water sources have also been protected despite evidence that many water sources have been polluted due to mining activities.

In conclusion, the White Paper says that Tibet is one of the cleanest areas in the world. The only areas of the world with a cleaner environment are the North and South poles. Tibet has virtually no air, water or land pollution, the White Paper says. It ignores any negative effects of China's economic development projects in Tibet while crediting the Chinese Government with having protected and preserved the environment.

Like all sections of the White Paper, much history is left out in regard to the environment in Tibet. It does not mention China's exploitation of Tibet's forests, both within the TAR and in eastern Tibetan areas now part of Sichuan. It ignores all the detrimental effects of mining, particularly the damage to streams and water sources due to unregulated gold mining in eastern Tibet. It also ignores the fact that mining for other resources in Tibet, particularly gold, copper and other minerals is just beginning on an industrial scale, with correspondingly great potential for environmental damage.

The difference between Chinese claims in regard to their protection of the environment and the reality was illustrated by the landslide at the Gyama mine. The large Gyama mine near Lhasa was supposed to adhere to high standards of safety and environmental protection and was to avoid any pollution of local water sources. However, a landslide in March of 2013 killed 83 miners. The Chinese Government denied that the mine was the cause of the landslide but aerial photos of the sites showed clearly that mining detritus was the cause of the slide. Local Tibetans were deprived of their lands and they had complained that local water sources had been polluted. Despite Chinese claims that this mine would have no negative environmental impact on the local area, the photos show widespread environmental harm to the landscape.

The potential for environmental damage due to mining is the greatest ecological threat to Tibet's future. Mining is an inherently damaging operation to the landscape since large quantities of earth must be removed in order to reach the minerals underneath. Tibetans are usually opposed to any mining in areas that they consider sacred. However, the Chinese state and mining companies have shown little respect for Tibetans' wishes. The same is true in regard to the removal of nomads in order to restore grasslands. Chinese plans have ignored the welfare of Tibetans. Chinese claims about environmental protection in Tibet ignore the negative effects on the environment due to China's exploitation of Tibetan resources, past, present and future. China regards Tibet as a resource colony necessary for China's development, with the benefits going to China while Tibetans are left to suffer the environmental damage.

The concluding remarks of the White Paper claim that Tibet has leapt over several periods of history in its economic, cultural and social development, leading to a happy and prosperous life for the Tibetan people. Tibet's rapid progress has been due to its having chosen the correct path of socialism within the Chinese nation. The White Paper says that Tibetans voluntarily made this choice and have therefore become masters of their own country and their own fate. Tibet has thus been transformed from backwardness and poverty to prosperity and civilization. The White Paper says that only by adhering to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the socialist system and the system of regional ethnic autonomy have Tibetans become and remain the masters of their own affairs. Only by adhering to this path can the fundamental interests of the Tibetan people be safeguarded and developed.

The White Paper goes on to claim that Tibet could not have progressed so rapidly without the support of the Chinese central government and the Chinese people. Financial support since 1951 has totaled 450 billion Yuan, it says, which was 96 percent of the TAR budget. Despite the fact that Tibet is totally dependent upon financial support from Beijing, the White Paper claims that Tibetans are in control of all of their own affairs, which implies that central government funds have been given for Tibetans to do with as they please. However, the reality is that Tibet's development has been directed from Beijing and for China's priorities.

The White Paper claims that Tibetans themselves decided to abandon their old social and political system and that their progress is a result of that voluntary decision. However, the reality is that Tibet's fate has been dictated from Beijing. China also claims that Tibet's development is due to its having abandoned its previous isolation in favor of contact with foreign countries. However, the reality is that Tibet after 1950 was intentionally isolated by China to a greater extent than at any time in its history.

The Chinese White Paper says that the positive changes in Tibet are obvious to anyone, whether Tibetan or outsider. Therefore, any critics of Tibet's development path must have ulterior motives. Foremost among those critics are the so-called Dalai Clique, who have tried to hinder Tibet's development because of their hope to restore the old feudal system. The White Paper dismisses the Dalai Lama's proposals for a higher degree of autonomy within a Greater Tibet as contrary to China's constitution and Tibet's actual conditions.

The true aim of such proposals, it says, is to overthrow the socialist system and the regional autonomy system in Tibet, which are essential to Tibet's past and future development. International criticism of China's role in Tibet is dismissed as intentional distortion due to a wish to keep Tibet in a primitive condition or to interfere in China's internal affairs. It says that the people of Tibet have the right to develop their own country as they please.

The Chinese White Paper reveals a sensitivity about China's role in Tibet that is inseparable from the question of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet. The Chinese White Paper, however, does not address that issue. China cannot admit that Tibet was ever independent or that it might have a right to national self-determination based upon a separate national identity. Instead, China has to claim that Tibet could not have achieved any social or economic progress without being a part of China. China thus has to deny that Tibetans are capable of ruling themselves or developing by themselves while at the same falsely claiming that Tibetans do in fact control their own affairs under Chinese rule.

However, despite China's claim that all the decisions in regard to Tibet's political status, its social and political system and its economic development were made by Tibetans themselves, the reality is that all such decisions were made by the Chinese without any regard for Tibetans' wishes. Tibet did not voluntarily become a part of China and it did not voluntarily abandon its own government and political system in favor of the Chinese socialist system. Tibetans were not liberated nor did they achieve self-rule as China claims under Chinese rule.

Instead Tibetans have resisted Chinese rule and have been repressed as a consequence. In addition, many of China's development projects in Tibet have been disasters for the Tibetan people or have benefitted only China. China has repressed Tibetans far more than it has assisted them and it has exploited Tibet far more than it has aided it. The Chinese White Paper does nothing to address the real issue of Tibet, which is Tibetan self-determination. Instead, it tries to disguise the real issue with false claims of social and economic progress under Chinese rule.

The number of China's White Papers on Tibet and the constant repetition of the same themes reveal that Tibet is a persistent problem for China. Tibet's political status before 1950 is critical to the Chinese argument about the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. If Tibet were truly always a part of China, then there is no question about Tibet's political status. However, if Tibet were not fully a part of China before 1950 or at any time in its past history, or even if Tibetans are not now voluntarily citizens of the PRC, then there is a question about Tibetan self-determination. If Tibet was ever an independent state, then Tibetans might demand a restoration of that independence according to the right to national self-determination in international law.

Even if Tibetans were shown to be unwilling citizens of China they could demand the right to national self-determination. China is therefore determined to deny that Tibet was ever independent or that any Tibetans are unwillingly citizens of China at the present time. China therefore repeats its claim that Tibet has always been a part of China. However, even China has to admit that Tibet was independent during the Tibetan Empire period of the seventh to ninth centuries. China claims that Tibetans are happy within China now but it refuses to allow Tibetans to express their opinions, such as by means of a referendum.

China's White Papers prefer to obscure the issues of Tibet's political status in favor of the claim that Tibetans were peacefully liberated from their own feudal social and political system and that they have benefitted from China's assistance ever since. However, even this argument is fundamentally false. China invaded Tibet in 1950, so the means by which Tibet became a part of China were hardly peaceful. China claims that it did not invade Tibet at all, since all of eastern Tibet was already part of the Chinese province of Sikang, which China had claimed since the early part of the century but did not actually control or administer.

China claims that Tibet's so-called liberation was peaceful because it was achieved by negotiations after the invasion, but the negotiations were coerced by the invasion itself and the threat to continue that invasion if Tibet refused to negotiate. China claims that its invasion of Tibet was a liberation of Tibetans, but what was it that Tibetans were liberated from but their own government? China claims that it liberated Tibetans from a feudal social system, but it has to grossly exaggerate the inequalities and evils of that system in order to justify the imposition of Chinese control over Tibet. China's elimination of the former Tibetan government denied to Tibetans their right to govern themselves.

China's White Papers concentrate on how China's economic assistance has improved the economy in Tibet and the lives of Tibetans. However, Tibetans have suffered horribly due to China's political campaigns and its failed economic programs. Hundreds of thousands of Tibetans were killed in opposition to Chinese control over Tibet or due to the political campaigns after 1959. Tens of thousands starved to death due to Mao's misguided Great Leap Forward, as did millions of Chinese. Tibetans suffered economic exploitation and the loss of their personal freedoms due to the commune system, which lasted until the late 1970s. The economy in Tibet has improved after the abandonment of communization but Tibetans are still restricted in their personal and religious freedoms. Chinese immigrants now benefit more from economic improvements in Tibet than do Tibetans.

If Tibetans were as happy as the Chinese claim then they would not have risen up in protest in 2008, nor would more than 100 Tibetans have self-immolated since then. If Tibetans were as happy and contented as the Chinese claim then they would have no need to write so many White Papers in an attempt to justify Chinese policies in Tibet. The Chinese White Papers do not address the real issue of Tibet, which is Tibetan self-determination. Instead, they try to disguise the real issue with false claims of social and economic progress under Chinese rule.