

CHINA'S WHITE PAPER ON TIBETAN AUTONOMY

*SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE OF REGIONAL ETHNIC AUTONOMY*

A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF "EXPERT ON TIBET" PROGRAMS

ON

RADIO FREE ASIA

TIBETAN SERVICE

BY

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In September, 2015, China published another State Council White Paper on Tibet, the second that year. This White Paper, titled *Successful Practice of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet*, was issued on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. The previous White Paper, *Tibet's Path of Development is Driven by an Irresistible Historic Tide*, was issued in April 2015 in conjunction with a Tibet Work Forum meeting that was attended by Xi Jinping and other top Chinese leaders. The subject of the previous White Paper was Tibet's historical status as an inalienable part of China and China's rejection of the Dalai Lama's Middle Way policy and its refusal to dialogue with him on the basis of that policy. The latest White Paper is exclusively about autonomy in the TAR, but it reiterates some of the themes of the previous paper.

The White Paper justifies Chinese rule by demonizing Tibet's former feudal system and it rejects the Dalai Lama's Middle Way proposal for genuine autonomy by maintaining that Tibetans already enjoy full and extensive autonomous rights. The system of autonomy in Tibet is claimed to provide for self rule while promoting economic development and preserving Tibetan religion and culture.

The eight sections of the paper are about the evils of old Tibet, economic and social development after liberation, the political system of regional ethnic autonomy, self-rule in Tibet, economic subsidies for Tibet that improve Tibetans' welfare, preservation and promotion of culture, freedom of religion, and protection of the environment. Section titles are: "Old Tibet, Dark and Backward," "Embarking on the Road to Development and Progress," "The Political System Suited to China's Actual Conditions," "The People as Masters of the Country," "Improving People's Welfare," "Protecting and Carrying Forward the Excellent Traditional Culture," "Respecting and Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief," and "Promoting Ecological Progress."

The Preface of the White Paper defines Regional Ethnic Autonomy as a fundamental political system for ethnic minorities under the PRC's overall Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Regional Ethnic Autonomy supposedly establishes self-government by ethnic minorities under the unified leadership of the central government. Although the preface says that autonomy is exercised in autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties, the current White Paper apparently only addresses the system in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It claims that 92 percent of the 3,175,000 population of the TAR are Tibetan, that Tibetans are masters of their own destiny under the autonomous system practiced in Tibet, and that Tibet is now in its golden age.

The first comment that must be made about China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy system is that the name has been changed. The original name was National Regional Autonomy. The name was quietly changed around 1990 in both Chinese and English. The Chinese *minzu*, or "nation" in English, became *zuqun*, or "ethnic group" in English. The definitions of these terms in English

have definite political implications. Nations have the right to national self-determination in international law, whereas ethnic groups do not have any such rights. The change in nomenclature was meant to remove any such issues in regard to China's minorities and to define them as Chinese with a subsidiary ethnic minority status.

China had previously tried to distinguish between nation, meaning China, and nationality, meaning the minorities. This was based upon Marxist categories which defined nations but not nationalities as deserving of independent state status. However, this distinction was not enough for the CCP because nationalities are still typically defined as peoples with a separate territory, whereas ethnic groups are not. Thus, according to the latest distinction, China's ethnic minorities are not entitled to an ethnic autonomous region of their own of exclusive or even almost exclusive inhabitation, the CCP's original promises to the contrary notwithstanding.

Furthermore, the priority of the word regional in the new formula, a change from the previous National Regional Autonomy to the current Regional Ethnic Autonomy, makes the region the defining characteristic of autonomy. Thus, autonomous regions are reserved for peoples of many ethnicities, even including Han Chinese, rather than for specific ethnic groups such as Tibetans. In addition, the current debate among Chinese nationality experts is not toward refining definitions of ethnic identity and territorial boundaries where ethnic autonomy is to be exercised, but toward eliminating ethnic definitions and territorial divisions for the sake of Chinese national unity.

The previous White Paper attempted to deny that there is any political issue of Tibet about which China should negotiate with the Dalai Lama. This White Paper attempts to deny that there is any lack of autonomy in Tibet about which China should talk with anyone, whether Tibetans in Tibet, the Dalai Lama, or China's many international critics. However, the need for China to keep publishing its White Papers about Tibet's political status, sixty-five years after that issue was supposedly resolved, reveals that China still has to address that issue because it is not resolved for Tibetans or for the world. Similarly, China's need to publish a White Paper about Tibetan autonomy, fifty years after that issue was supposedly resolved by the creation of the TAR, reveals that autonomy of any genuine sort is still not a reality for Tibetans.

### Old Tibet, Dark and Backward

The characterization of traditional Tibet before the Chinese takeover as dark and backward is fundamental to China's justification for the imposition of its rule over Tibet. Tibet's former social and political systems are described as feudal serfdom under theocracy in which there were no democratic, economic, social, or cultural rights and basic human rights were not protected. Old Tibet is denounced for its wretched system that stifled human rights and destroyed human qualities.

This section of the White Paper contains the usual litany of China's propaganda about the evils of old Tibetan society. This propaganda concentrates on the inequality inherent in a society dominated by an aristocracy and a religious establishment, both of which were dependent upon the labor of a serf class that had few rights against the abuses of their overlords. Serfs were supposedly routinely punished with cruel and barbaric forms of torture. Serfs were bound to their owners and had no rights to any land or produce of their own. The three big serf owners were the monasteries, the aristocracy, and the feudal government. They were only five percent of the population but owned almost all the land and property of Tibet. Serfs were subjected to labor requirements for their owners in the aristocracy or monasteries, as well as requirements to provide transportation for travelling government officials. Serfs were subjected to taxes that they could not pay and therefore had to resort to taking loans that they could not repay, thus being mired in poverty and lack of personal freedom forever.

The Chinese White Paper quotes one Chinese author and two Westerners to bolster its case about the evils of old Tibetan society. However, the vast majority of foreign writers' accounts of Tibet do not substantiate their case. While most explorers and travelers acknowledge the poverty and inequality of traditional Tibet, they do not report the abuses of serfs or their lack of any human rights or happiness as emphasized by the Chinese Communists. Most writers report that almost all Tibetans appeared to be remarkably happy despite their obvious poverty. Serious studies of old Tibetan society also reveal that serfs were not without any rights to their own property and produce as the Chinese claim. They also had considerable personal freedoms, including that to leave the estates to which they were bound to become free traders or wage laborers or to become a monk or nun. The Tibetan feudal system was typical of a certain stage of economic and political development in every society, but was not therefore inherently evil as the Chinese claim. Tibetan serfs were more bound to their overlords than citizens are tied to their own leaders in modern societies, but their tax burdens were not entirely dissimilar.

The reason that Chinese propaganda emphasizes and exaggerates the supposed evils of old Tibet is that China needs to justify its rule over the non-Chinese Tibetan people. China thus argues that class inequalities in old Tibet were more unjust than China's denial of Tibetan self-determination. The Chinese attempted to convince Tibetans that the CCP could represent their interests better than would their own ruling classes. However, this argument attempts to ignore the issue of Tibetans' right to rule themselves rather than to be ruled by the Chinese, and it ignores the actual history of Chinese rule over Tibet. Chinese rule replaced a Tibetan exploitative ruling class with another exploitative ruling class, this time Chinese rather than Tibetan and far more repressive and more destructive of Tibetan identity and culture than any Tibetan government ever was.

Embarking on the Road to Development and Progress

This section is divided into three parts on Tibet's supposed peaceful liberation, abolishing feudal serfdom after the 1959 revolt, and taking the socialist road with the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. These three parts correspond to the Chinese Communists' three stages in the process of achieving socialism: Liberation from feudalism and imperialism; Democratic Reforms, or emancipation of serfs; and Socialist Transformation, or collectivization and achievement of autonomy and self-rule. All these processes were chosen by the Tibetan people themselves, according to the White Paper, so that they might realize liberation and become the masters of their own fate.

The first part of this section is titled "Driving out imperialist forces and realizing peaceful liberation." The White Paper claims that Tibetans put up heroic resistance to the British invasion of 1904, presumably due to loyalty to China rather than to Tibet. However, the weakened Qing government was unable to assist them. Tibetans supposedly continued to oppose British influence in Tibet, again due to loyalty to China, and welcomed the establishment of the PRC in 1949 because they hoped that the liberation of China from imperialism would be quickly followed by the liberation of Tibet. The Panchen Lama is quoted as welcoming Tibet's liberation, but the White Paper does not mention that he was a child, that his predecessor had been in exile in China since 1924, or that his entourage wanted to be escorted by the Chinese Communists back to Tashilhunpo just to regain their former lands and privileges. In fact, although Tibetans resisted the British invasion in 1904, they quickly came to welcome the British presence as a counter to China's imperialist ambitions against Tibet.

The Chinese White Paper claims that the Tibetan people warmly welcomed PLA troops when they entered Tibet after the signing of the 17-Point Agreement. The Agreement said that Tibetans would drive out imperialist forces and return to the family of the Chinese motherland and they would actively assist the PLA in entering Tibet and consolidating national defense. These statements are presented as having been entered into willingly by Tibetans and their government. However, the historical facts are that China invaded Tibet and coerced the Tibetan government into signing the 17-Point Agreement. Far from welcoming Chinese assistance in expelling foreign imperialist influences in Tibet, most Tibetans considered the Chinese themselves to be imperialists and their invasion of Tibet to be an illegitimate denial of Tibetan independence and their right to national self-determination.

The White Paper claims that the PLA's entry into Tibet and Tibet's return to the Chinese motherland signified the realization of Tibet's liberation and independence from foreign imperialism. Tibet's history and destiny were thus fundamentally changed. This last statement is certainly true. Without the Chinese invasion, Tibet might have achieved real liberation from all kinds of imperialism, particularly Chinese imperialism, and it would have become possible for Tibet to have real independence and self-rule.

The second part of this section is titled “Abolishing feudal serfdom and the people becoming masters.” As the title indicates, this is the second stage in achieving socialism: the liberation of the serfs after the 1959 revolt and the people becoming their own masters by means of Democratic Reforms. The White Paper claims that the Tibetan feudal class tore up the 17-Point Agreement and staged a rebellion. The rebellion was put down by the PLA, while simultaneously liberating the serfs and beginning Democratic Reforms. Many of the liberated serfs were made officials after the revolt, replacing those of the former Tibetan Government. The former Tibetan Government was dispossessed of its power and its properties, and the feudal lords, including monasteries, were dispossessed of their lands and serfs. Tibetans were thus freed from feudal serfdom and theocracy and became the masters of their own fate.

The reality is that it was Chinese reforms in eastern Tibet that caused the revolt. Also, the revolt was not an attempt by serf-owners to preserve their positions and privileges but a national revolt by Tibetans of all classes against the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. The fact that what the Chinese called democratic reforms were used as a part of the repression of the rebellion reveals the nature of these so-called reforms. They were actually a means to identify friends and enemies and to repress the latter. Titles to land that were redistributed to serfs with much ceremony in 1959 were confiscated again only a few years later during collectivization and communization. The official positions given to so-called liberated serfs were in name only; actual authority was exercised by the Chinese. The real result of the revolt and its repression was that the Chinese gained complete control over the lives of Tibetans, not that Tibetans gained that control for themselves.

The Chinese White Paper claims that the Democratic Reforms campaign freed the Tibetan people from the spiritual shackles of theocracy. What this meant in reality was that monasteries no longer received any taxes or food from their estates and therefore monks could no longer remain there. Monasteries were then closed, after which they were systematically looted of their treasures, which were trucked to the Chinese interior. Less valuable items like clay statues, *thangkas*, wood printing blocks, and texts were destroyed. The Chinese justified this looting under the ideology of Democratic Reform, which involved the dispossession of the feudal lords and redistribution of their property to the common people. However, in this case the Chinese defined the people as the Chinese people and thus stole or destroyed Tibet’s national wealth and much of its cultural property while claiming that this was part of Tibetans’ liberation from feudalism. Tibetan Buddhist statues were taken to China and melted down for their metallic content without any regard for their artistic or cultural value. This theft of the property of the monasteries was an intentional destruction of Tibetan national wealth and identity, all while claiming to be for the liberation of Tibetans from their own feudalism.

The third part of this section is “Establishing Tibet Autonomous Region and taking the socialist road.’ This is the third stage of building socialism in which Tibetans supposedly achieved autonomous self-rule and began to establish communes.

The White Paper goes through the history of the creation of the TAR beginning with the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) announced in 1954. This happened when the Dalai Lama was in Beijing for the meeting of the first National People’s Congress. The Dalai Lama was persuaded to come, along with dozens of Tibetan Government officials, with the promise that Tibetan autonomy would be granted at this meeting. The Dalai Lama wrote in his autobiography that Tibetans were deceived with the expectation that autonomy equivalent to Tibet’s previous independence would be granted. They imagined that the Chinese would leave and the Tibetan Government would continue to function as before.

However, what the Chinese meant was that a Preparatory Committee for the future Tibet Autonomous Region would be initiated, rather than the previous Chinese plan to govern Tibet by means of a military and political committee under the joint administration of the PLA and CCP. This was presented as a concession of autonomy to Tibet, or what the Chinese meant by autonomy, rather than a continuation of military rule. Tibetans thus found themselves participating in the creation of the PRC’s system of National Regional Autonomy instead of being granted the traditional sort of autonomy that they expected.

The Chinese maintained that the creation of the Preparatory Committee did not violate the provision of the 17-Point Agreement that there would be no changes in the system of government in Tibet. This was because the Tibetans themselves had supposedly agreed to this change, which was consistent with the provision of the 17-Point Agreement that changes would be made only with Tibetan approval.

The Preparatory Committee for the TAR was inaugurated in Lhasa in 1956. It was ostensibly controlled by Tibetans and headed by the Dalai Lama himself. As the Dalai Lama later wrote, the Chinese had five members of the committee while Tibetans had 30, giving Tibetans a large majority. However, the Tibetan Government had only 10 members while another twenty Tibetan members represented the Panchen Lama and the so-called Chamdo Liberation Committee, both of which were entirely under Chinese control. The Chinese therefore controlled all votes. The significance of the creation of the Preparatory Committee was that all political power was transferred from the Tibetan Government to the Chinese.

This Chinese takeover of governing authority in Tibet under ostensible Tibetan leadership was what the Chinese meant by autonomy. The usurpation of Tibetan governmental authority was obvious to Tibetans and contributed to the discontent that led to the 1959 revolt. The inauguration of the TAR in 1965 was simply the final achievement of what the Chinese

meant by autonomy all along, now without any interference from any former Tibetan cultural, religious, or political institutions. The Chinese White Paper claims that Tibetans thus achieved self-rule and embarked on the socialist road. However, the creation of the TAR along with communization put all aspects of Tibetans' lives under the total control of the Chinese.

### The Political System Suited to China's Actual Conditions

The subtitle of this section of the White Paper is "Implementing the system of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet conforms to China's reality as a unified multiethnic country." This section attempts to justify the PRC's regional ethnic autonomy system as appropriate for China based upon the claim that China has been a unified country since antiquity composed of many ethnic groups, of whom the Han ethnic group is only one among many. All China's ethnic groups theoretically have equal rights, despite the fact that the Han are the vast majority and each of the other ethnic groups is an insignificant minority in comparison.

The White Paper claims that unification has been the trend of China's national development since the unification achieved under the Qin dynasty of the third century B.C. This is the farthest back into ancient history that the Chinese have ever attempted to push the unified country theme. There have been separatist regimes among some nationalities since then, but unification has always been reestablished as the inevitable trend of Chinese history, the paper says. This version of history attempts to portray the unification tendency as natural and inevitable and never the result of Chinese expansionism or colonization of previously separate frontier states.

The White Paper reiterates the claim that Tibet has been "an integral part of China since ancient times." The Tibetan ethnic group is said to have always been a communal part of the Chinese nation sharing a common destiny. The ancestors of the Tibetans and other ethnic groups who lived on the Tibetan Plateau in ancient times are said to have established extensive contacts with the Chinese interior and made their own contributions to the formation and development of China. The White Paper then skips ahead to the Yuan dynasty of the thirteenth century as the time that Tibet actually came under Chinese administrative jurisdiction.

The Chinese prefer to make vague claims about ancient times, inevitable trends toward unification, and communal contacts rather than admit that Tibet during the Tang Dynasty and Tibetan Empire period of the seventh to ninth centuries was definitely not a part of China. Tibet had contacts with China during that time that included both marriage alliances as well as almost perpetual conflict in which Tibet was as often as not the victor. The treaty of 822 established borders between the two separate countries. China has tried to portray that same treaty as having signified the subordination of Tibet to China simply because China was referred to as the uncle in the relationship. Nevertheless, the actual treaty is one between two countries.

Tibet's independence during the empire period disproves the Chinese claim that Tibet was a part of China "since ancient times." It also establishes Tibet's right to national self-determination under international law since a nation can claim such a right if it was independent at any time in the past. Theoretically, a nation can claim the right to self-determination even if it was never independent but had its right to choose independence denied by another nation. Tibetans of the empire period established an independent state covering all the Tibetan Plateau. They did not enter into any sort of "inevitable merger" with China despite two marriage alliances. Tibetans fought to maintain their independence and did so successfully during that time, a fact that cannot be denied by Chinese propaganda. China's claim that Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times is clearly disproved by the history of the Tibetan Empire.

The White Paper cites the Yuan dynasty of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries as the time that Tibet actually came under Chinese administrative jurisdiction. It claims that all Chinese dynasties and governments since that time have ruled Tibet as an integral part of China, but with unique forms of government that took into account Tibet's special local customs and conditions.

The White Paper says that the Yuan dynasty directly administered Tibet and established a postal system, took censuses of the population, and appointed officials. It does not mention that the Mongol Yuan dynasty was non-Chinese and was an empire that included not only China but Mongolia and Tibet. Also, the Sakya officials appointed by the Yuan administered Tibet as an autonomous territory or country that was a part of the Mongol Empire rather than as a part of China. The native Han Chinese Ming dynasty of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries continued the tradition of appointing officials, or rather of conferring honorific titles on lamas who could be persuaded to travel to the Ming court, which the White Paper interprets as evidence of Chinese sovereignty. However, the awarding of such meaningless titles simply continued a Chinese tactic of pretending to authority over frontier territories by awarding titles that were construed as conferring governing authority even though a traditional authority already existed.

This tactic was continued by the Manchu Qing dynasty (1642-1912), which pretended that its conferral of a title on the Fifth Dalai Lama established Chinese authority over all of Tibet. The Chinese Communists now claim that this conferral of title actually established the lineage of Dalai Lamas. Chinese propaganda ignores the fact that the Dalai Lama to whom the Qing emperor gave a title was the fifth in the series and that the title of Dalai Lama was given to Sonam Gyatso, the third in the series, by an independent Mongol chieftain, Altan Khan. It also ignores the fact that the Qing dynasty, like the Yuan, was not Chinese, but was of Manchu origin, and like the Yuan, was a non-Chinese empire rather than a government of China.

The Qing dynasty continued to pretend to appoint every subsequent Dalai Lama. China's claims to sovereignty over Tibet are substantially based upon this pretension of authority to approve the reincarnation of Dalai Lamas, who were actually chosen by Tibetan Buddhist criteria. China's claims to sovereignty over Tibet are thus mostly based upon pretense. The non-Chinese Yuan and Qing dynasties actually did exercise some administrative authority over Tibet at various times, but neither considered Tibet a part of China nor administered it as such. Thus, China's claim to sovereignty over Tibet since ancient times is exposed as simply a fabrication, while its claim based upon actual administration since the Yuan dynasty is mostly a pretension.

The Chinese tactic of pretending to have authority over frontier territories was continued by the Republican government of the first half of the twentieth century. The White Paper cites Chinese government organizations with ostensible jurisdiction over Tibet, such as the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Bureau, as if it actually administered Tibet. It claims that the head of this bureau actually approved the selection of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and presided over his installation ceremonies in Lhasa. However, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was chosen by traditional Buddhist methods and installed by Tibetans themselves. A Chinese official was present, as were representatives of other countries, but he did not preside over the ceremony as claimed. In fact, the Republican period was the time when Tibet actually enjoyed independence from China, refuted Chinese claims to sovereignty over Tibet, and took steps to establish recognition of its independence from other countries.

Tibet's attempt to establish and maintain its independence was cut short by the Chinese Communists. The CCP claimed that Tibet was already an integral part of China; therefore, there was no issue of China's denial of Tibet's right to self-determination. It claimed to have peacefully liberated Tibet despite Tibetan resistance and the coercive nature of the 17-Point Agreement by which China annexed Tibet. It claims that the system of regional autonomy under which Tibetans are divided among several autonomous regions and districts is appropriate for Tibet and other minorities because none have contiguous majority nationality territories unmixed with Han Chinese or other nationalities. However, Tibet did have a well-defined contiguous territory, essentially corresponding to the Tibetan Plateau, in which Tibetans were the majority.

The White paper claims, despite all evidence to the contrary, that the 1959 revolt was an attempt by serf-owners to preserve their power and was not a national revolt against Chinese rule. And it claims that Tibetans achieved local self-rule by means of the inauguration of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965 despite the fact that this was when the most total Chinese control over Tibetans was achieved and when Tibetans had few freedoms or rights at all.

The Chinese White Paper claims that all this was achieved by Tibetans themselves when the reality is that foreign Chinese rule was forcibly and involuntarily imposed upon them. It claims that Tibetans have achieved autonomy and ethnic equality and that the political system in

Tibet has the support of the people. However, China does not dare to allow Tibetans to actually express their political opinions in any way except to declare undivided loyalty to China and the CCP.

The White Paper says that the foundation of the system of regional ethnic autonomy is the fact that the people are the masters of the country. The system of autonomy provides a guarantee for the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to be masters of the country and of society. This is all possible, the paper says, because Tibetans have the democratic right to vote and to stand for election. The PRC's Regional Ethnic Autonomy law stipulates that the people of all ethnic groups directly elect deputies to people's congresses at the county, township, and village levels. They in turn elect deputies to the autonomous region congress and to the National People's Congress. The Monpa and Lhoba ethnic groups in the TAR also have designated deputies to the autonomous region congress and the National People's Congress. In recent elections in the TAR, 94 percent of the people of all ethnic groups, including the Han, participated in elections. Deputies of the Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups account for 67 percent of deputies from the TAR to the NPC and 70 percent of deputies to the autonomous region congress.

The White Paper says that the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet fully enjoy the right to manage their ethnic and regional affairs. According to the Constitution of the PRC the organs of self-government of the TAR exercise the power and functions of provincial-level state authorities as well as the power of autonomy according to the regional ethnic autonomy law. The People's Congress of the TAR is theoretically the supreme authority in the region in the exercise of autonomy and in regard to ethnic and regional affairs. It has the authority to enact its own laws and regulations and to alter or reject laws passed by state level authorities if they are not in accordance with conditions in the autonomous region.

Despite the White Paper's claims about elections and autonomy practiced in the TAR the reality is quite different. Tibetans may have the right to vote, but only for the one candidate already chosen by the CCP committee in Tibet, which is composed of Chinese and the most servile Tibetan collaborators. The TAR People's Congress they supposedly democratically choose has no actual authority. The people of all ethnic groups in Tibet include the Han Chinese, which is why about one third of elected officials are of the Han nationality. All political authority in Tibet is exercised by the CCP committee, which takes its orders from Beijing. There has never been a Tibetan head of the CCP in the TAR. It is often said that Tibet has less actual autonomy than most Han Chinese provinces. The delegates selected for the National People's Congress in Beijing similarly have little or no actual decision-making or governing authority. All authority in Beijing as well as in China is exercised by the CCP.

Tibet is such a sensitive issue for the PRC that the CCP does not dare allow any real autonomy. Although the TAR theoretically has the authority to alter regulations made in Beijing, the only examples that the White Paper can cite are in regard to a few Tibetan holidays and the Marriage Law that allows some unique forms of marriage. Before the one-child act was recently abolished, Tibetans were allowed more than one child. Tibetans are forced to celebrate Chinese political holidays, including the recently introduced Serf Liberation Day that corresponds to the day in 1959 that China abolished the Tibetan Government, and they have little or no personal or political freedom or autonomy despite China's claims to the contrary.

### The People as Masters of the Country

This section attempts to prove the dubious assertion that Tibetans have real ethnic autonomy. The White Paper claims that the principle that the people are the masters of the country is the foundation of the system of regional ethnic autonomy. It says that the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet fully enjoy the right to manage their ethnic and regional affairs. It emphasizes the constantly increasing numbers of minorities in official positions in the TAR. However, the White Paper fails to mention that all real authority in the TAR resides with the Communist Party Committee in the TAR, which has few Tibetans, and with the CCP in Beijing, whose interests are those of the majority Han Chinese rather than Tibetans.

The White Paper proclaims that ethnic equality and unity are the goal of CCP policy in Tibet. In the absence of ethnic equality and unity among all ethnic groups, it says, the people cannot be masters of the country. However, while the CCP might claim that Tibetans have equal rights with the Han Chinese, not only within Tibet but anywhere in the PRC, Tibetans might have a different opinion, if they were allowed to freely express their opinions. Also, in the formula about ethnic equality and unity, unity is obviously the most important. Any Tibetan who expresses an opinion about Tibet's former independence or its right to national self-determination will be mercilessly repressed for failure to uphold the principle of Tibet's union with China. Any Tibetan who tries to promote or exercise the right to cultural autonomy theoretically guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution and the law on regional ethnic autonomy is likely to be accused of separatism. Ethnic equality even on a theoretical basis is allowed only for those Tibetans who profess unity with China and loyalty to China and the CCP.

The White Paper makes much of the development aid and financial subsidies that China has provided to Tibet. From 1952 to 2014 that assistance has amounted to 650 billion Yuan, which was more than 90 percent of the budget of the TAR. It also cites the large number of Han Chinese who have been sent to work in Tibet to assist Tibet's development. It also mentions that the CCP has conducted six national Tibet Work Forums, which supposedly demonstrates the Party's concern with Tibet.

However, the White Paper does not say anything about how much China has taken from Tibet in regard to natural resource exploitation or the theft of the wealth of Tibetan monasteries during the Democratic Reforms of the early 1960s. It does not mention that Chinese state subsidies to Tibet mean that the economy of Tibet is dominated by the Chinese state and by individual Chinese rather than by Tibetans. It does not acknowledge that the reason that so many Chinese officials are sent to Tibet is to exercise Chinese control over Tibet. There is no mention of the large numbers of PLA and PAP who are in Tibet to control Tibetans or that Chinese colonists dominate the economy and tourists are altering Tibet to suit Chinese sensibilities. The Tibet Work Forums have been devoted to Chinese control over Tibet rather than to achieving Tibetan autonomy.

This section ends with the slogan endlessly repeated by the CCP that China's ethnic groups are dependent upon each other, that Tibetans cannot live without assistance from the Han Chinese and other ethnic groups, and that the Han Chinese and other ethnic groups cannot live without the Tibetans. Other ethnic groups are obviously added to this slogan to deny the fact that Tibet's fundamental political relationship is with China and the Han Chinese and not with the big family of the Motherland that just happens to include the Han Chinese as the vast majority. However, the absurdity of this slogan is obvious to anyone, not only to the Tibetans. Tibetans could easily live without the Chinese and the Chinese could certainly live without Tibetans. Tibetans, according to the Chinese, have decided upon unity and stability over separatism and chaos. However, it is the Chinese who have decided on unity and stability, not the Tibetans, who are given no choice.

### Improving People's Welfare

The fifth section of the paper makes the claim that Tibet's economy has rapidly developed under regional ethnic autonomy and with financial assistance from the central government and other Chinese provinces. Economic development is claimed to have brought real benefits to all ethnic groups in Tibet and to have furthered the harmony and stability of society in the TAR.

The White Paper cites statistics showing that Tibet's economy has vastly grown since the inauguration of the TAR in 1965. It conveniently uses 1965 as the base year since China does not want to talk about the Great Leap Forward of the early 1960s when Tibetans starved along with most Chinese. The year 1959 was when China assumed total and direct political control over Tibet and instituted its programs for Democratic Reforms and Socialist Transformation, which were supposed to liberate Tibetan society from feudal serfdom and improve the economy through collectivism and communism. However, the results are nothing that the Chinese now want to talk about. The White Paper also does not mention that it is Chinese who dominate and benefit most from economic development in Tibet rather than Tibetans.

The White Paper claims that priority has been given to the development of industries with Tibetan characteristics, meaning mostly small-scale enterprises like handicrafts, Tibetan medicine and agriculture, and animal husbandry. However, mining, transportation infrastructure, and tourism are included in this category. Even agriculture and animal husbandry development, which should benefit Tibetans, has often failed to do so or has even harmed them because all development plans originate in Beijing and follow Chinese Communist ideology and Chinese strategic interests rather than Tibetan local interests. Agriculture suffered for the first twenty years of Chinese control due to collectivization and communization. Agriculture was released from Chinese ideological control only in the 1980s. Animal husbandry similarly suffered due to communization and due to Chinese attempts to “civilize” and control Tibetan nomads by settling them in permanent housing and ending their nomadic lifestyle. Chinese resettlement of Tibetan nomads has only intensified recently with the attempt to eliminate the nomadic lifestyle altogether.

The White Paper includes mining as an industry that supposedly benefits Tibetans and the economy of Tibet. The Chinese state claims ownership of all the land and all the resources of Tibet as well as all of China. But China’s exploitation of Tibetan resources, beginning with the destruction of Tibet’s forests, has only harmed Tibetans and their environment. Mining is only really beginning in Tibet due to the relatively recent development of necessary infrastructure like roads, railroads, and hydroelectric power. Tibetans receive no benefits from mining at all, even in jobs, which go almost exclusively to Chinese. Tibetans inherit only the environmental damage that is an inevitable consequence of mining. Tibetan protests against the desecration of sacred mountains and the pollution of local air and water resources are usually met with the arrests and repression of activists and the ignoring of their concerns. Even the supposedly autonomous administration of the TAR in Lhasa is unable to stop the pollution of the Kyi Chu river with hazardous and poisonous metals from the Gyama mine, east of Lhasa, which has just announced plans for a vast expansion of its operations.

The White Paper also claims that the development of transportation infrastructure has been for the benefit of Tibetans. The building of roads linking Tibet with China was a CCP priority beginning in the early 1950s. Roads were hurriedly constructed from Sichuan, Qinghai, and Xinjiang in order to consolidate Chinese logistical control over Tibet. The significance of the completion of these rudimentary gravel roads in 1954 is revealed in the fact that China then immediately began the political transformation of Tibet with the creation of the Preparatory Committee for the TAR. The completion of the road network secured China’s physical control over Tibet and gave the CCP confidence that it could begin its campaign to transform Tibet into a part of China. These roads were proclaimed to be for the benefit of Tibetans, but their true purpose was to secure China’s logistical and military control over Tibet. China’s road network in Tibet was quickly expanded up to the Indian and Nepal borders and facilitated Chinese military logistics in the 1962 border war with India. China also completed a pipeline from the end of the

then existing railroad at Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa in the late 1970s which allows it to store petrol (gasoline) and kerosene (heating oil and jet aviation fuel) in Tibet in case of another war with India.

China also wanted to build a railroad into Tibet as soon as possible but was prevented from doing so for many years due to engineering difficulties, primarily involving altitude and permafrost conditions over much of the route. The railroad was finally completed only in 2006 when those difficulties were finally resolved. The railroad from Golmud to Lhasa further secured China's military and logistical control over Tibet and immediately led to an increase in Chinese colonization and tourism. It was also proclaimed to be for the benefit of Tibetans, but the railroad and the consequent influx of Chinese was cited by many Tibetans as one of the factors behind the discontent leading to the uprising of 2008. The railroad allowed China to quickly move military and security forces into Tibet in 2008, and it allows for the movement of military forces into Tibet in case of a conflict with India. China's plans for extensions of the railroad to Shigatse and east toward Sichuan are more for facilitating mining projects than for any other reason. China also plans to extend the railroad to Nepal in order to increase Chinese influence in that country while decreasing that of India.

The White Paper also touts the building of airports in Tibet as having benefitted Tibetans, but the reality is that airports, like roads and the railroad, serve a military function in the event of further unrest in Tibet or conflict with India. China's development of Tibet's hydropower potential also has little to do with helping Tibetans. Most of the electricity produced by hydropower in Tibet or planned for the future is intended for mining enterprises that require a huge amount of electrical power. Much of the rest will be exported to adjacent Chinese provinces through a recently developed high capacity network of power lines linking Tibet with Sichuan and with Gansu through Qinghai. Hydropower development in Tibet, like mining, is just beginning on a large scale and is an important part of China's plans to exploit Tibetan resources for the benefit of China. Tibetans will be left with little but the negative environmental consequences of Chinese mining and hydropower development projects.

Chinese tourism to Tibet also has few benefits and many harmful effects on Tibetans and Tibetan culture, though some Tibetans are employed in tourism. In the early days of international tourism to Tibet in the 1980s, foreign tourists preferred Tibetan tourist companies, guides, and local hotels and restaurants. However, tourism is now vastly expanded and is managed almost entirely from the Chinese interior. Tourist numbers have reached more than 12 million per year and their impact has transformed much of Tibetan culture into forms suitable for Chinese tourists, such as cultural performances that are designed to cater to Chinese prejudices about Tibetan culture and that include Chinese propaganda about Tibetan history.

The White Paper makes many claims about the improvement of Tibetan peoples' welfare. Tibetans' incomes have greatly increased, and they now have better housing and more household appliances and consumer goods. Many Tibetan households have refrigerators, TVs, computers, washing machines, motorcycles, and mobile phones. Tibetan farmers and herdsman have been moved into new more modern homes partially financed by the government. Many offices and homes in Lhasa city are now heated by a central gas network. Water supply, electricity, transportation, medical facilities, and communication have all been improved. Government subsidies have been allocated for poverty alleviation and to improve agriculture and animal husbandry.

Tibetan social security has also improved, it is claimed, because the government has allocated many government positions to Tibetans and provided pensions to retirees, including old monks. Tibetan health has been improved because of the building of clinics and hospitals and provision of doctors and medicine in all areas at little or no cost. Tibetan children are provided with a free education up to the senior middle school level and higher education up to the university level for those so qualified. Teachers from the Chinese interior have been sent to Tibet and Tibetan students sent for education in the interior.

Tibet has also created scientific research institutes to study subjects including history, economics, language, religion, agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, ecology, traditional medicine, and geothermal and solar energy. Tibet now has libraries, cultural centers, museums, and dance and drama troupes. Newspapers and magazines have increased and book publishing has vastly grown, mostly at government expense. In 2014 the TAR distributed 34 million copies of books. Tibetans have access to radio, film, and television and many more facilities for the production of programming and film production.

This section of the White Paper concludes with the theme that Tibetan happiness has increased, or, in other words, that Tibetans are happy under Chinese rule because their economic, social, and cultural lives have been improved. Lhasa has even been claimed to be the happiest city in China for several years running, based upon a survey of local residents by a Beijing-based newspaper. However, the claim that Lhasa is the happiest city is ludicrous given Tibetan discontent as expressed in the uprising in 2008, the repression of any protests since then, and the ongoing series of self-immolations in eastern Tibet. When surveyors have asked people in Lhasa if they are happy or not, Chinese residents undoubtedly say yes because they have all the privileges in Tibet and are afraid of being critical of the government. Tibetans are even more afraid of revealing any criticism of the Chinese government, so they may also say that they are happy.

Tibetan farmers and herdsman have forcibly been moved into new houses, much of the cost of which they have to pay themselves, and herdsman have been prevented from being

nomadic, which has harmed their animal husbandry practices and contributed to grassland degradation. Tibetans are provided with official jobs but deprived of any real authority, which always resides with Chinese officials. They are often allowed to retire early and are provided with pensions primarily to make them dependent upon and therefore loyal to the government. Education is now mostly in the Chinese language rather than Tibetan; Chinese teachers are sent to Tibet and Tibetan students to the interior to promote the Chinese goal of assimilation. Newspapers, magazines, and books are mostly propaganda and are provided for free for that reason. All other media are also devoted to Chinese propaganda, and outside publications and media are prevented from reaching Tibetans. Tibetans are not allowed to publish any materials critical of the Chinese government, supportive of the Dalai Lama, or telling the true history of Tibet.

### Protecting and Carrying Forward the Excellent Traditional Culture

Incredibly, despite the well-documented repression of Tibetan culture and destruction of cultural and religious artifacts and monuments, China still claims that it has protected Tibetan culture. The White Paper says that in the long course of history the Tibetan people have created their own splendid culture that enriches and is an important component of Chinese culture. It claims that since the establishment of the TAR in 1965 the autonomous region government has made remarkable achievements towards respecting, protecting, inheriting, and carrying forward Tibet's excellent traditional culture. Tibetan culture today has achieved new vitality by combining tradition with modernity, the White Paper says.

Chinese propaganda intentionally makes its claims about the preservation of Tibetan culture dating from the creation of the TAR in 1965 rather than from 1950 or even 1959 when China gained full political control over Tibet. The reason for ignoring the years before 1965 is that most of the cultural destruction took place before that year. Even after 1965 the repression of Tibetan culture continued due to the political campaigns of the Cultural Revolution.

The destruction of Tibetan cultural monuments and artifacts was not haphazard or unintentional. It was the intentional result of the Democratic Reforms campaign. This campaign was based upon an ideology of redistribution of wealth from the formerly exploitative ruling class to the formerly exploited lower class which was now to become the new ruling class. Tibetan serfs were ceremoniously liberated from their former serf masters, and great public burnings of former debt obligations to feudal lords and monasteries were held. The property of the feudal lords was supposed to be redistributed to the former serfs, but Tibetans claim that the best of everything disappeared into the houses of the Chinese cadres. Since monasteries were also feudal lords, their property was also redistributed.

What the Chinese meant by the redistribution of the wealth of the Tibetan feudal lords to the people was not that it would be redistributed to the Tibetan people but to all the Chinese people, including Tibetans. The CCP claimed to represent all the people and therefore it felt justified in confiscating Tibet's wealth for its own purposes. Under the ideology of Democratic Reforms they removed from most of Tibet's many monasteries all religious artifacts, including precious stones and metals, statues, and other metal implements. These were trucked to China over a period of several years. Metallic objects were melted down and used to make proletarian implements like agricultural tools. Gold objects and precious stones also disappeared. The many thousands of Tibetan Buddhist *thangkas*, a precious part of Tibet's cultural heritage, were mostly destroyed, many by burning, because they had no value to the Chinese Communists. Since the communists' ideology did not include the appreciation of art, or even the value of art, they destroyed a vast wealth of Tibetan art that could have been sold on the international art market for far more than the value that they got out of it by melting valuable statues. Had they been even more farsighted they could have preserved the Tibetan monasteries and their art works for a future tourist industry. The Chinese could then truly claim to have preserved Tibetan culture.

Almost all aspects of Tibetan culture and national identity were simultaneously repressed precisely because they represented a separate cultural and political identity that the Chinese were determined to eradicate. Not only were most Tibetan monasteries destroyed and Tibetan Buddhism repressed during Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution, but religion, language, culture, even dress style and household decoration were also repressed in an attempt to eradicate anything that made Tibet different from China. The claim that it has preserved Tibetan culture and artifacts since 1965 thus ignores the actual history of China's intentional destruction of culture and artifacts before that date but also the continuing repression and destruction after that date during the Cultural Revolution and after.

The White Paper claims that the Tibetan language is protected and that its preservation is an essential component of China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy system. However, many Tibetans say that the elimination of the Tibetan language in favor of Chinese is an essential part of China's actual policy to assimilate Tibet and its culture to China and Chinese culture. The White Paper cites the Chinese Constitution to the effect that all of the PRC's minority nationalities, or ethnic groups as they are now called, have the freedom to use and develop their own languages. Bilingual teaching in Tibetan and Chinese is supposed to be practiced in all schools in Tibet.

However, the White Paper admits that bilingual teaching is practiced only in primary schools and only in agricultural and pastoral areas along with some small towns. Middle schools use Chinese language while Tibetan is taught as an option. Higher education is taught only in Chinese, with Tibetan language options. This is far from bilingual education. Chinese is obviously favored; Tibetan students cannot achieve upper level education by taking the Tibetan language path. Chinese is essential in education and in subsequent employment, and Tibetan

language is preserved only as an archaic remnant of Tibetan culture and Tibet's former national identity.

The White Paper claims that both Tibetan and Chinese are used in official meetings and documents and in law enforcement and the legal system. Many books, magazines, and newspapers are published in Tibetan. Radio and TV also broadcast in Tibetan. However, Tibetans say that almost all government business in the TAR is conducted in Chinese. Even if Tibetan is used it is usually only a superficial exercise in regional autonomy in which Tibetans and the Tibetan language are used while the Chinese make all real decisions behind the scenes. Tibetans report that the Post Office will not accept a letter with an address in Tibetan, even if intended for an address inside the TAR. TAR publishing houses do print many books in Tibetan but only on safe historical subjects or on current Chinese propaganda themes. All media, including print, radio, and TV, are primarily devoted to propaganda, whether in Tibetan or Chinese. Thus, the purpose is not to preserve Tibetan language or culture but to use the Tibetan language to promote Chinese cultural and political themes.

The Chinese Government claims that it has protected and promoted Tibetan culture by creating educational and research institutes such as Tibet University, Tibet Traditional Medical College, China Tibetology Research Center, and Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences. The TAR has also collected and preserved Tibetan traditional culture like music, dance, folk epics, and drama. The Tibetan Gesar epic has been extensively researched and preserved. Tibetan opera has been promoted by the creation of several performing arts troupes that perform at traditional festivals. However, here, once again, the purpose of these institutions is not the preservation of Tibetan culture except when that culture has no nationalist or political implications. These institutions study and research only politically safe subjects like ancient culture or the Gesar epic.

### Respecting and Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief

The Chinese Constitution declares that freedom of religious belief is a fundamental right. The White Paper says that Tibet achieved true religious freedom only after Democratic Reforms, which separated religion from politics and ended the Tibetan system of unity of religion and politics, or theocracy. Since then, the Chinese central government and the local government of the TAR have fully respected citizens' rights to freedom of religious belief and have protected all religions and sects and respected religious activities and religious beliefs according to Chinese law.

China claims that Tibetans did not have religious freedom before Democratic Reforms because of cultural pressure to believe in and practice Buddhism. By separating religion from the political system, China theoretically removed that pressure and allowed Tibetans more freedom

of choice about their religious beliefs and practices and gave them the option to reject all religious belief, the position preferred and promoted by the CCP. China thus instituted the separation of church and state, a principle that is the basis for religious freedom in other countries, particularly democratic states like the United States. However, the CCP's policy of freedom of religion was really about freedom from religion, including the repression of religious practice and destruction of religious institutions.

The CCP's ideology is that religion is backward and, according to Marx, a characteristic of pre-socialist periods of history. Mao even once said to the Dalai Lama that religion is poison. In addition, religion is one of the primary characteristics of Tibetan culture and Tibetan national identity, an identity that the CCP was intent upon eradicating. The CCP's justification for the repression of religion and destruction of monasteries was that the religious establishment was one of the three pillars of feudalism, the others being the aristocracy and the government, both of which were closely associated with the religious establishment. After the 1959 revolt, most monasteries were closed either because they had supported the revolt in some way, even if only by providing food or shelter to the rebels, or because they were deprived of their estates during Democratic Reforms and could no longer feed their monks. China thus virtually eliminated the Tibetan religious establishment and religious practice while at the same time claiming to have achieved religious freedom.

The White Paper claims that religious activities in Tibet are respected and protected. However, during Democratic Reforms and later during the Cultural Revolution, when China claims that it established true religious freedom in Tibet, Tibetans had no freedom of religious belief or practice whatsoever. Monasteries were closed. Lamas and monks were killed, imprisoned, or forced to flee into exile. Tibetans were pressured to conform to Chinese political campaigns that denigrated religion and were coerced to participate in the physical destruction of most of the already closed and looted monasteries.

Tibetans were allowed some freedom of religion after the Cultural Revolution ended and the reform period began. However, even these limited freedoms were curtailed after the demonstrations and revolts of the late 1980s, since the Chinese correctly identified the revived monasteries as the sources of a restored Tibetan cultural identity and nationalism. Since then, the numbers of monks and religious practice in monasteries has been severely limited, and monasteries are closely supervised to prevent any anti-Chinese or pro-Dalai Lama separatist activities. Monasteries have been subjected to continuous Patriotic Education campaigns and supervised by so-called democratic management committees composed of Chinese officials or loyal Tibetan monks. Tibetans now have some small degree of freedom of religion, at least compared to the time of Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution, but it is highly restricted and limited in order to prevent any Tibetan nationalist or separatist sentiments or activities.

The White Paper cites many examples of religious freedom in Tibet and state support for religious activities. It claims that there are currently 1,787 sites for different religious activities in the TAR and more than 46,000 monks and nuns. Tibetans are able to carry out religious activities according to their own traditions. Religious ceremonies and festivals are celebrated the same way they always were. Religious believers have shrines in their homes. Millions of Tibetans from other parts of the TAR make pilgrimages to Lhasa. Prayer flags, *mani* stones, and prayer wheels are seen everywhere. Temples are full of believers. Tibetans enjoy full freedom in their conduct of religious activities.

The White Paper claims that Tibetan Buddhist culture is respected and protected. It says that the central government and the local government of the TAR have always regarded Tibetan Buddhist culture as an important component of traditional Chinese culture and have offered protection and support for the collection, compilation, publication, and research of religious classics. The central government has sponsored the publication of many Tibetan Buddhist texts. The White Paper repeats the claim that China has financed the restoration of several major monasteries, without mentioning why they were previously damaged or destroyed.

The White Paper makes much of the standardization of the reincarnation system, the Chinese Government having made regulations and established control over the recognition of reincarnations, including the drawing-of-lots system for high-level lamas like the Panchen Lama. Similarly, it claims to have managed and regulated the system of Buddhist learning by establishing democratic management committees in monasteries and setting up training academies for high-level monks in Lhasa and Beijing and instituting standard examinations for the *geshe* degree and other high-level ranks. What these last claims reveal is that China's support for Tibetan Buddhism is primarily about management and control.

The White Paper studiously avoids any examination of China's policy toward Tibetan Buddhism before the reform period of the 1980s. This is because China's claim to have protected Tibetan religious freedoms is contradicted by its repression and destruction of Tibetan Buddhism during Democratic Reforms from 1959 in Central Tibet and earlier in Eastern Tibet, and during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Whatever China has done to restore Tibetan monasteries since that time has simply been to repair a small part of the damage it caused by its own policies. Most of what was destroyed is irreplaceable. China can never replace the tens of thousands of statues and *thangkas* it intentionally destroyed, and it has restored only a tiny fraction of the temples and monasteries destroyed.

Even now China's policy toward Tibetan Buddhism and religious freedom is far more about control and repression than freedom. The numbers of monasteries and monks are limited, and monasteries are closely managed and controlled. Religious studies are required to inculcate

patriotism to China rather than to Tibet and the Dalai Lama. Pilgrimages from Tibetan areas outside the TAR are not allowed, while at the same time Chinese tourists are allowed to flood into Tibet. Reincarnations are managed to promote loyalty to China with the ultimate goal of choosing a patriotic and submissive successor to the 14th Dalai Lama.

### Promoting Ecological Progress

The eighth section of the paper says that China protects the ecology of Tibet because Tibet is an important safety barrier to China. What this means is that Tibet, along with Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, are barriers between China and the plateau, steppe, and desert areas to the west. These formerly border territories of China were the home of nomads and nomadic empires that threatened China in the past. China built the Great Wall to keep these steppe nomads out, with varying degrees of success. The Great Wall failed to prevent the conquest of China by the Mongol and Manchu nomadic empires. Now, China faces an ecological threat from these same areas due to advancing desertification exacerbated by climate change.

China traditionally made great efforts to protect itself from the nomadic cultures to its west and northwest. Chinese dynasties chose a strategy either of advance into the steppes to control the nomads or of withdrawal behind the Great Wall and the offering of bribes to nomads to avoid their raids. China could usually manage only temporary advances outside the Great Wall. The withdrawal strategy also had its faults, the most obvious of which was that it sometimes totally failed, leading to many centuries of conquest dynasty rule. The PRC attempted to resolve this problem permanently by incorporating Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet into the PRC. Much investment and effort was made and continues to be made to gain military and logistical control of those areas and to promote economic development. Climate change and ecological deterioration threatens not only all those investments but also the future of China.

Since the early 1950s the PRC has attempted to build a modern version of the Great Wall using belts of trees. The plan to create an ecological barrier, announced in 2009, includes grassland protection and improvement, planting trees, nature reserves, wetland protection, development of alternative energy sources, desertification control, and water and soil conservation. Hundreds of thousands of trees have been planted in an attempt to restore border areas and prevent desert encroachment. These efforts have had varying degrees of success but mostly have been failures due to the difficulty of keeping trees alive in arid areas. China has also recently attempted to preserve and restore grassland areas by limiting nomadic herds and by settling the nomads themselves. The effectiveness of this strategy is disputed by many foreign experts who maintain that nomads actually help preserve grasslands. The success or failure of this strategy remains in question. Some of the areas from which nomads have been removed are being made into national parks, which the White Paper cites as a part of China's attempt to protect the local ecology, but the success of which is still uncertain. Climate change is

meanwhile predicted to cause a gradual desertification, including the melting of glaciers that supply much of the current flow of rivers.

The White Paper claims that Tibet has followed a sustainable path compatible with the harmonious coexistence of economy, society, and the ecological environment. However, this is hardly the case in the past and even in the present. The PRC embarked on ambitious natural resource exploitation plans in Tibet from the early 1950s. Forestry and mining were the primary emphasis. Forest exploitation was undertaken on a large scale, mostly in Kham, using Tibetan prison labor after the 1959 revolt. Forests were so extensively exploited that the practice had to be stopped after floods in the lower Yangtze in 2006. Mining was only possible in the early years in relatively lower and more accessible areas like the Tsaidam Basin. Now, however, with the development of infrastructure like roads, railroads, and hydroelectric power, mining has become more feasible in other areas of the Tibetan Plateau. Mining is inherently damaging to the local environment, thus China's plans for further exploitation of Tibet's mineral resources will have inevitably negative effects on Tibet's environment and ecology.

This section of the White Paper concludes that Chinese Government and TAR policies have created a stable and balanced ecological environment. Tibet's water, air, soil, and environmental quality are said to remain in good condition and its rivers, lakes, forests, grasslands, wetlands, glaciers, snow mountains, and wildlife are under effective protection and are mostly still in their original natural state. However, an analysis of the White Paper reveals that it exaggerates the effectiveness of China's ecological protection measures and minimizes their negative consequences. It also neglects other negative ecological influences such as climate change, Chinese immigration to the Plateau, destructive forestry practices, and mining. The positive or negative effects of the creation of nature reserves and the settlement of nomads or the regeneration of grasslands are also uncertain at this point. The White Paper emphasizes the wisdom and effectiveness of government policies while ignoring the negative consequences of absolute government decision-making and control and the lack of any local Tibetan freedom to make their own ecological decisions.

Much of the damage done to the ecology of the Tibetan Plateau due to Chinese policies is irreversible. The destruction of forests due to excessive logging up until 2006 cannot be repaired by current and more enlightened forestry practices. Forest regeneration rates are very high in some places in Tibet, particularly many parts of Kham, but some areas have simply been permanently deforested.

China's policies in the grasslands have varied over the years but have been most predominantly characterized by their destructive effects. In the 1950s, wetlands were drained as a way to create more pasture and land for agriculture. Only recently has it been realized that wetlands are necessary for the health of rivers like the Yellow and Yangtze. Nomads were at one

time encouraged to increase the size of their herds, which had negative effects on the ecological health of the grasslands. Then, nomads were made to limit the size of their herds, with negative effects on the nomads themselves. Then they were allocated fixed pastures and made to fence in their lands, with negative effects on the nomads as well as the grasslands. Now, the Chinese authorities declare the beneficial effects of their settlement of nomads and creation of nature preserves even though international grasslands experts do not agree that nomadic pastoralism is harmful to the grasslands. Financial compensation provided to the settled nomads is temporary, inadequate, and often reduced by corruption.

Tibetans are allowed little or no decision-making power in regard to their own environment and ecological policies and practices. This is most notable in regard to mining, which has inevitably destructive environmental effects and which Tibetans have repeatedly protested against with no effect. Mining and other resource exploitation is a primary purpose of Chinese policy in Tibet, a fact that the White Paper does not mention. Tibetans have no control over mining and other destructive Chinese activities in Tibet, a fact that negates most if not all of China's claims about beneficial ecological policies and environmental protection.

### Conclusion

The White Paper ends by claiming that Tibet, under the firm leadership of the CCP and by means of regional ethnic autonomy, has achieved a historical leap from a backward, impoverished and isolated society into one that is progressing, prospering, and open. Such progress has demonstrated that regional ethnic autonomy is necessary for Tibet's development and progress and that it conforms to the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet. The regional ethnic autonomy system is said to suit China's national conditions and the reality of Tibet and is thus the right choice for Tibet.

The White Paper goes on to claim that regional ethnic autonomy has allowed the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to become their own masters and to enjoy full democratic rights and extensive economic, social, and cultural rights. It denounces the Dalai Lama for plotting for Tibetan independence by means of his Middle Way policy and his demands for a Greater Tibetan territory and a high degree of autonomy, which would negate the successful system of regional ethnic autonomy. It says that the Dalai Lama and his separatist activities violate the Chinese constitution and its political system and damage the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet, which is why they have met strong opposition from all Chinese people, including those of all ethnic groups in Tibet, and hence why they are doomed to failure. The White Paper claims that with the advance of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the system of regional ethnic autonomy will be further developed and improved, enabling the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to be their own masters at an even higher level.

The conclusions of the White Paper expose the falsity of Chinese claims about the regional ethnic autonomy system rather than its success. The falsity of Chinese claims that regional ethnic autonomy gives Tibetans mastery over their own fate is revealed by the very name. The political system that theoretically governs Tibet and other autonomous regions was originally named national regional autonomy, but the word ethnic was later substituted for national in order to deprive Tibetans of any claim to national self-determination. Nations have the right to self-determination in international law but ethnic groups do not. China thus denies Tibetans the right to national self-determination, which totally negates the claim that Tibetans are masters of their own fate. Were Tibetans truly free to determine their own fate they would undoubtedly choose to be an independent country. The reason that China cannot allow Tibetan self-determination is that Tibet is a separate nation that would not willingly choose to be a part of China.

China does not even allow Tibetans the autonomous rights of an ethnic group under the regional ethnic autonomy system. Tibetans have no real control over their own political system even in regard to cultural issues that should be their right according to any understanding of ethnic autonomy. Tibetans do not have the right to choose their own political system even on the local level, nor do they have control over any of the political issues that govern their lives. Since China has forcibly made Tibet a part of China, even Tibetan culture is a threat to Chinese unity because it is so different from Chinese culture. Tibetans are not allowed any political freedom for obvious reasons, but they are also allowed almost no cultural freedom or autonomy because most aspects of Tibetan culture have political implications that are threatening to China. The political reality that Tibet is not willingly a part of China negates all of China's claims about Tibetan autonomy. China cannot allow any real Tibetan autonomy because of the fear that cultural autonomy will lead to political separatism. China's real political goal in Tibet is thus assimilation rather than autonomy.