

*CHINA'S TIBET*  
*THE TRANSFORMATION OF TIBETAN NATIONAL IDENTITY*

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A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF PROGRAMS  
ON  
RADIO FREE ASIA  
TIBETAN SERVICE

## CHINA'S TIBET<sup>1</sup>

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF TIBETAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

This article is a revised and updated synopsis of a series of RFA “Expert on Tibet” programs, originally broadcast in 2000, on China’s attempt to transform Tibetan national and cultural identity, to integrate Tibet into China, and to transform Tibetans into Chinese. The title of the series, “China’s Tibet,” refers to the way in which Tibet is described in Chinese propaganda as a possession of China. “China’s Tibet” means that China claims ownership over Tibet. The terminology of “China’s Tibet” or China’s “ownership” of Tibet reveals that even China unintentionally admits that China and Tibet are separate political entities. It is only because Tibet is not the same national, cultural, or political entity as China that China has to characterize Tibet as owned by China.

China’s official statements and propaganda in English invariably refer to Tibet as “China’s Tibet,” or sometimes as “Tibet, China.” The PRC’s foremost state-sponsored academic journal on Tibet is titled *China's Tibet*. A recent (1997) official Chinese version of Tibet’s history is titled *The Historical Status of China's Tibet*. The PRC’s official website on Tibet is *China's Tibet Information Center*. The possessiveness revealed by Chinese terminology about Tibet is most obvious in the title of the PRC’s 1992 State Council White Paper on Tibet: “Tibet--Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation.” China even insisted that the Chinese version of the classic French comic, *Tintin in Tibet*, should be “Tintin in China's Tibet,” until the original publisher objected.

The Chinese terminology is intended to inculcate the idea that Tibet and China are inseparable, or that Tibet belongs to China. It is meant to meld the concept of Tibet with that of China so that Tibet cannot be thought of without thinking of it as a part of China. It is meant to eliminate the concept of Tibet as a separate or independent national or political entity, or as a “country” in any way separate or separable from China. Nevertheless, the possessiveness revealed by the terminology contradicts China’s purpose. The terminology “China’s Tibet” identifies Tibet as a thing, an entity, or a polity, possessed by China. This entity has an identity that China wants to eradicate, but the possessiveness implied serves to emphasize that identity rather than obscure it.

“China’s Tibet” is a colonialist term. When Macao reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1999, China declared that the era of colonialism in Asia was ended. What was meant was European colonialism. However, many Tibetans argue that colonialism still exists in Asia so long as China claims ownership over Tibet. Rather than giving up colonialism by giving up Tibet, or even allowing any genuine autonomy in Tibet, China seems determined to eliminate the evidence of its colonialism by eliminating all evidence of Tibet’s separate national identity.

Tibet's distinct non-Chinese national identity is China's greatest problem in Tibet. Before 1950 most Chinese thought of Tibet, if they thought of it at all, as different from China but nevertheless as part of China's territory. Between 1912 and 1950, China had practically no authority in Tibet; there were no Chinese administrators in Tibet and practically no Chinese in Tibet at all, except in some parts of Kham and Amdo, the eastern provinces of traditional Tibet. Still, China claimed Tibet as part of Chinese territory and most Chinese probably never gave any thought to Tibetans' desires to be independent. However, China's desire to possess Tibet during this time increased Tibetan determination to preserve their independence.

Marx taught that colonialism inevitably arouses anti-colonial nationalism in response. However, the Chinese Communists did not recognize that this would happen in Tibet because they believed that Tibet was already a part of China and that most Tibetans already accepted that they were subjects of China and that they identified themselves as Chinese. They were also confident that their culture, whether traditional Chinese culture or Chinese socialism, or the combination, would be so attractive to minority nationality peoples such as Tibetans that they would willingly abandon their own cultures, which were in many cases thought to be little more than barbarism.

Chinese governments before the twentieth century had claimed only a nominal authority over Tibet. Most Tibetans were probably not even aware that China claimed Tibet as part of China. Tibetan cultural and religious identity was strong but political identity was weak. Chinese attempts to impose direct control over Tibet increased at the beginning of the twentieth century in response to the British invasion of Tibet in 1904. Tibetan national identity increased in response to both British and Chinese imperialist threats against Tibet. At the same time, Tibetans, as well as many peoples of the world, became aware of the theories of national self-determination. While China became more intent upon eliminating Tibetan independence and establishing Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, Tibetans began to claim their rights to independence.

### The Tibetan Nation and the Chinese Conquest

Tibet's distinct national and cultural identity is the greatest obstacle to China's goal of the political integration and cultural assimilation of Tibet. Tibetan nationalism has strong roots in Tibet's distinct territory, religion, culture, language, and political administration under the government of the Dalai Lama. However, Tibetan nationalism was scarcely developed before the twentieth century. Nationalism is typically aroused in response to foreign threats, and Tibet is no exception. Tibetan nationalism began to be aroused in the early twentieth century due to the British invasion of 1904, China's attempt to directly impose its authority upon Tibet in response, and subsequent British support for Tibetan autonomy. By the time that China was finally strong enough to achieve its goal of gaining direct control over Tibet in 1950, many Tibetans had developed a strong sense of Tibetan nationalism.

Tibetan nationalism and Tibetans' desires for self-determination have continued to exist even under the conditions of the Chinese occupation of Tibet since 1951. This,

then, is China's dilemma: Tibetan nationalism has survived and even increased along with China's attempt to eliminate Tibetan national and cultural identity. The rise of Tibetan nationalism under Chinese occupation demonstrates that colonialism exacerbates anti-colonial nationalism, just as Marx said.

However, the Chinese Communists did not consider themselves colonialists, because they believed that Tibet was already a part of China. And they believed that China could not be imperialist because China was in the pre-capitalist stage of socio-economic development. Only capitalists, according to Marxist doctrine, could be imperialists. They also believed that Marxist-Leninist nationalities theory and policy provided the solution to the nationalities question. The Chinese Communists thought that they could eliminate minority nationality nationalism, or what they called "local nationalism," by means of propaganda, class struggle, and the political system of national regional autonomy. In addition, the Chinese Communists had many policies, campaigns, and seductive or coercive techniques to overcome local nationalism and to integrate Tibet socially, culturally, and politically into China. Ultimately, they were willing to use whatever force was necessary to impose Chinese rule over Tibet.

The Chinese Communists tended to believe that Tibetan nationalism was nothing more than the result of past mistreatment by Chinese officials or that it was due to the intrigues of foreign imperialism. They did not openly admit to the existence of any Tibetan anti-Chinese nationalism or any reason for such since they assumed that Tibet had "always" been a part of China and that Tibetans accepted that fact. Traditional Chinese frontier policy was based upon assimilation and assumed that frontier barbarians should be grateful for the "gift" of Chinese culture. The Chinese Communists assumed that some of the Tibetan upper class might temporarily resist Tibet's incorporation into China, due to their own class interests or imperialist intrigues, but that they could be co-opted by the United Front and eventually eliminated by class struggle. The lower classes were assumed to be natural allies of the Communists since they were thought to be ruthlessly exploited by the upper classes. The Chinese Communists thought that many Tibetans would be apprehensive about integration but that their apprehensions could be relieved by the incorporation of Tibetans within the Chinese administration, by the autonomy promised in the 17-Point Agreement, and by the system of national regional autonomy. Autonomy was assumed to be a temporary policy, however, to be voluntarily abandoned by Tibetans as they became more assimilated to the Chinese political system and Chinese socialist culture.

So confident was Mao that Tibet would be easily integrated into China that in 1954 he openly announced to Tibetan leaders his intention to colonize Tibet. Mao suggested that Tibet's population of two to three million should be increased to five or six million and then to 10 million. Mao announced this intention without any apparent comprehension that this might be anything but beneficial to Tibetans or acceptable to them as such. Mao and other Chinese leaders portrayed the colonization plan as a bargain for Tibetans as well as for China since land and natural resources, which Tibet had in plenty but China had not, would be exchanged for population, which Tibet had little of but China had in plenty. Most Chinese, apparently including Mao, tended to think of

Tibetan territory as practically empty, the number of Tibetans as practically negligible, and Tibetan land and resources as practically unused by Tibetans. They thought it completely natural that the large Chinese population should expand to fill up the empty spaces of Tibet and they thought that Chinese colonization would benefit Tibetans by raising their cultural level and economic conditions. Mao and most of the Chinese Communists seem to have been unaware that Tibetans might not consider it a bargain to give up their independence as well as their land and resources to China and to be overwhelmed by Chinese colonists. Or they thought that Tibetan resistance could be overcome by CCP nationalities policies that allowed nominal Tibetan autonomy, even though assimilation was the ultimate aim of those policies.

Chinese cultural ideology justified the expansion of China's borders and the assimilation of non-Chinese frontier peoples as a natural extension of Chinese culture and political authority. Marxist-Leninist doctrine held that the merging of nationalities was a natural and inevitable process. The doctrine of proletarian internationalism assumed that class identity and class interest would predominate over national identity. Ultimately, communists believed that the national issue was in essence a class issue. What this means is that once class equality was achieved within a nationality, then equality between nationalities would automatically follow and minority nationalities, like Tibetans, would have no reason to want separation or independence from other nationalities, like the Chinese. This would especially be true, it was assumed, because the fraternal majority nationality, the Chinese, would have assisted the minority nationality, the Tibetans, in eliminating class exploitation and in achieving class equality. The advanced nationality would also have assisted the more backward nationality in economic, social, and cultural development for which the Tibetans were expected to be suitably grateful. Not least of what the Tibetans were expected to be grateful for was the gift of Chinese socialist culture. That the Tibetans might want to keep their own culture was little contemplated. It was also assumed that the Tibetan lower classes would support their liberators, the Chinese Communist Party, against their exploiters, the Tibetan upper class.

The Chinese Communists were confident in their assumptions and their doctrines. Chinese cultural ideology was very ancient and Marxist-Leninist doctrines were purported to be the inevitable course of history. However, the Chinese Communists also had certain factors to their advantage that assured them that their conquest of Tibet would be successful. The first was the fact that they had the military force and political strength necessary to occupy and control Tibet. Mao spoke in the early 1950's of the necessity to establish Chinese military and political control over Tibet so that China might defeat any Tibetan revolt. The PLA had to be moved into Tibet and supported by motor roads before Chinese control over Tibet could be secure. Until then the 17-Point Agreement would be respected and no reforms would be made in the Tibetan political or religious systems. Once military and logistical control was secured, then the social reform and political integration of Tibet would proceed.

The first step in China's establishment of physical control over Tibet came in late 1949 and early 1950 when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Kham and Amdo, and in late 1950 when the PLA invaded the Chamdo district of central Tibet. The

second step came in early 1951, with the signing of the 17-Point Agreement, which allowed the PLA to enter the rest of central Tibet. The PLA soon set up a military command center in Lhasa, becoming the predominant military force in Tibet and, therefore, also the predominant political force. Although the Tibetan Government continued to exist, ultimate political power now resided with the Chinese. In 1954 two unpaved roads from China to Tibet were completed, one from Sichuan through Kham and the other from the north through Qinghai. With the completion of these roads, the PLA could be supplied from China and reinforcements could be moved into Tibet in case of trouble. Until this time the Chinese had refrained from altering the Tibetan Government or making any social or political reforms. However, once their control was secured the Chinese began to more directly exercise their authority in Tibet.

In addition to establishing military and political control, the Chinese Communists circumscribed the territorial definition of Tibet. Previous Chinese governments had separated Kham and Amdo from Central Tibet in order to more directly control those areas. This practice the Chinese Communists also followed, claiming that the political separation of Kham and Amdo from Central Tibet reflected historical divisions. This was true, but the divisions had been made by the Chinese themselves and they reflected Chinese territorial encroachments upon Tibet. In addition, the perpetuation of these divisions contradicted the Chinese Communists' own national regional autonomy system, which was based upon a policy of allowing minority nationality autonomy in all areas of contingent nationality inhabitation. In other words, any area where nationalities lived together without the inclusion of other nationalities was supposed to be an autonomous region for that nationality alone. All of Tibet, U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo, was contiguous and of majority Tibetan population and therefore should have been one autonomous region. However, the Chinese maintained that the Tibetan Government in Lhasa had not directly controlled eastern Kham and Amdo. Thus historical and political criteria were used to justify the division of Tibet into various provinces, autonomous regions, and autonomous districts.

In addition to dividing eastern Kham and all of Amdo from what was to become the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the Chinese also made temporary divisions within Central Tibet. The Chamdo district of western Kham was separated from Tibetan Government control by placing it under the so-called Chamdo Liberation Committee. This arrangement was supposed to reflect the Chamdo district's prior liberation and the Chinese claim to Kham dating from the invasion and occupation of Kham from 1905 to 1910. In 1939 the KMT had proclaimed a new province, Sikang, in Kham. The Chamdo Liberation Committee perpetuated this so-called Sikang province until 1955. The separation of the Chamdo district from central Tibet was also supposed to reflect the Chinese Communists' claim that their 1950 invasion of Chamdo was not an invasion of Tibet since Chamdo was already part of a Chinese province.

In Central Tibet the Panchen Lama's domains in Tsang were constituted as a separate area of administration as if deriving from a separate local government. The Chinese created political institutions for the Panchen Lama equivalent to those of the Tibetan Government and construed the Panchen Lama's prestige and authority as

equivalent to that of the Dalai Lama. Ngari in western Tibet was also removed from Tibetan Government control and placed under the military control of the Xinjiang Military District, whereas the rest of Tibet was under the Sichuan Military District. Chamdo, Tsang, and Ngari were all under complete Chinese control. The implications of these territorial divisions within central Tibet was that Tibet had not been a unified state but had rather been several separate territories all under the overall authority of China.

Besides establishing physical and military control over Tibet, the Chinese Communists also took steps to establish political control and to begin the political integration of Tibet. The process by which China gained political control over Tibet can be divided into five major steps. The first step was the coerced 17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, by which China forced Tibet to accept Chinese sovereignty. The second was the 1954 *Panchshila* agreement with India, by which China gained international recognition of its sovereignty over Tibet. The third was the 1956 establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR), by which China transferred political authority in Tibet from the Tibetan Government to a Chinese-created and Chinese-dominated administration. The fourth was the Democratic Reform campaign, implemented in eastern Tibet before 1959 and in the TAR only after the 1959 revolt, by which China eliminated Tibetan leadership and gained title to all Tibetan property. The fifth was collectivization and communization, again begun outside the TAR before 1959 and inside only after, by which China gained access to and control over Tibetan agricultural production.

By means of the military invasion of Tibet in October 1950 and the threat to continue the advance of the PLA to Lhasa if Tibet did not capitulate, China forced the Tibetan Government to accept the 17-Point Agreement. China claimed that its invasion was not an invasion at all because the Chamdo district where it invaded was not part of Tibet but rather was part of the Chinese province of Sikang.

Despite the fact that China had gained sovereignty over Tibet only by force, China's claim to sovereignty was not challenged internationally. This was because of the uncertainty about Tibet's political status and because no country had formally recognized Tibet as an independent country. Nevertheless, China's annexation of Tibet was considered illegitimate or at least questionable by much of the international community. However, in 1954 China gained formal international recognition of its conquest of Tibet by means of an agreement with India, the *Panchshila*, or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The five principles were mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual nonaggression, noninterference, equality, and peaceful coexistence. Despite China's having established the five principles as its doctrine on foreign relations, it had violated Tibet's independence without regard to any of the five principles.

In 1955 China created the PCTAR, whose purpose was ostensibly to prepare for the creation of the TAR but which effectively transferred administrative authority from the Tibetan Government to the Chinese-controlled PCTAR. China thus violated the promise of the 17-Point Agreement that the political system in Tibet would remain

unchanged. Once physical and political control was secure, the Chinese began their program of social reforms.

In deference to the promise of the 17-Point Agreement that reforms would not be made in Central Tibet until Tibetans themselves requested them, the Chinese began Democratic Reforms in 1956 only in Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo outside the TAR. However, Democratic Reforms, which included confiscation of the lands of the upper classes and monasteries and the persecution of upper class and religious leaders, in eastern Tibet led to revolt that spread to Central Tibet. The 1959 revolt was suppressed by means of military force as well as by the implementation of Democratic Reforms in Central Tibet. The use of the Democratic Reform campaign to suppress revolt illustrates the repressive nature of what was purported to be democratic. The campaign allowed the Chinese to repress any actual or potential Tibetan leadership for resistance.

Democratic Reforms gave the Chinese legal title to Tibetan property. Collectivization and communization gave them direct access to Tibetan agricultural production. Food supply for the PLA and Chinese officials in Tibet was an immediate and perpetual problem that was not completely resolved by the completion of roads into Tibet. Food supply was again a problem during the three years of famine from 1959 to 1962 caused by Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forward campaign. Collectivization in Tibet partially resolved that problem, at least for the Chinese, by giving them control over Tibetan agricultural production.

The Chinese Communists' achievement of political control over Tibet allowed them to implement their policies for the transformation of Tibetan national identity. Democratic Reforms were intended to transform the social structure of Tibet and begin the economic transformation, while Socialist Transformation, or collectivization and communization, was intended to complete the economic transformation and achieve Chinese control over all aspects of Tibetans' lives. Within those campaigns there were policies and techniques meant to enforce Chinese aims and to begin the process of transforming Tibetan national identity into loyalty to the CCP and China. These included ideological indoctrination, coercion, and propaganda. In addition, political campaigns whose primary purpose was the political integration of Tibet were also intended to transform Tibetan national identity.

### Ideological Indoctrination

Besides the political integration of Tibet with China, the Chinese Communists pursued a program of ideological indoctrination and ideological and cultural assimilation of Tibet within China. The ideological assimilation of Tibet involved a redefinition of political and geographical terminology, a redefinition of national identity, and the creation of new social and political organizations within which ideological indoctrination was pursued.

One of the first steps in the ideological transformation and assimilation of Tibet was a redefinition of names, or what in ancient China was called a rectification of names.



Primary in this redefinition of names was the designation of Tibet as a part of China and the introduction of terminology such as “China’s Tibet” and “Tibet, China.” Chinese Communist Party nationality policy redefined the Tibetan nation as a minority nationality of China. Tibetans were designated as Chinese, or Tibetan Chinese, and Chinese as Han Chinese. Central Tibet became the Tibet Autonomous Region and eastern Tibet was no longer referred to as Tibet at all, though it was divided into several Tibetan Autonomous Districts. Chinese names or Chinese mispronunciations of Tibetan names were given to other places, things, or people in Tibet. A new political terminology was introduced to describe newly created political and social organizations and to define the terms of the Chinese Communist Party’s political ideology.

The ideological redefinition of Tibetan identity included not only the designation of Tibetans as Chinese but also the transformation of Tibetan national identity and the redirection of Tibetan national loyalty from Tibet to China. The primary tool in this attempted transformation was class theory and class struggle. Chinese Communist class theory held that Tibetans’ loyalty should be based upon class rather than nationality, and that ordinary Tibetans had more in common with those of the same class of any nationality than with the upper class of their own nationality. The Tibetan upper class was defined as the enemy of ordinary Tibetans while the CCP was purported to be their natural ally. Ordinary Tibetans were encouraged to redefine and redirect their loyalties from nationality to class and from their own exploitative upper class to their class’s natural representative, the CCP. Tibetans were encouraged to denounce their own upper class and to replace their leadership with the leadership of the CCP.

The discredited “idea of Tibetan independence” was characterized as an imperialist scheme to detach Tibet from China. The Tibetan upper class that had collaborated with foreign imperialists was therefore denounced as not only anti-Chinese but as anti-Tibetan as well. Self-determination was defined as inappropriate for Tibetans because they were supposedly scattered in different provinces and mixed with other nationalities. However Tibetans were scattered in other provinces only by the territorial divisions created by the Chinese themselves. Tibet’s liberation by China was proclaimed as Tibetans having become masters of their own affairs and of their own fate, when actually it meant that Chinese had become their masters.

A major tool of the Chinese Communists for the ideological transformation of Tibet was indoctrination in Communist propaganda. The first step in the ideological indoctrination of Tibetans was the creation of social, educational, and political organizations. A variety of social organizations were created, such as youth and women’s organizations that served as a recruiting ground for educational tours to China and scholarships for schooling in China. Minority nationality institutes were created for Tibetans at Xianyang near Xian in Shaanxi Province and for Tibetans and other minorities at the National Minorities Institute in Beijing and at provincial nationalities institutes in Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai. At these institutes Tibetans were indoctrinated with Communist ideology and taught Chinese while Tibetan language was de-emphasized and Tibetan culture was denigrated. Schools were also created within Tibet where Tibetans were similarly indoctrinated.

Political organizations were also created that replaced Tibetan political institutions and within which Tibetans were instructed in CCP ideology. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was created as a manifestation of the United Front policy. The United Front supposedly gave noncommunist political parties and national minorities a voice in political affairs. Similarly, the creation of the PCTAR theoretically provided for the exercise of Tibetan autonomy but was actually little more than a front behind which the Chinese exercised all real authority. The creation of the TAR in 1966 and the TAR People's Congress and People's Government were also facades behind which the Chinese exercised all authority.

The Chinese program for the ideological assimilation of Tibet involved a redefinition of Tibetan national identity and a transformation of Tibetan institutions into Chinese institutions. Tibetans were taught that they were actually Chinese and that they were a part of the "Great Family of the Motherland." They were taught that Tibet had always been a part of China and that Tibetans were not a separate nation but merely a minority nationality within China. Tibetans were instructed to transfer their loyalty from their own national leadership to the class leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. They were instructed in CCP ideology and taught to conform to that ideology and to accept the reality of CCP authority in Tibet. Chinese ideological indoctrination of Tibetans was enforced with the promise that conformity and cooperation would be rewarded while resistance would be mercilessly repressed.

#### Coercion

Chinese methods of persuasion and indoctrination were backed up by coercion in order to enforce Chinese control over Tibet and to repress Tibetan resistance. China's ultimate weapon against Tibetan opposition was the threat to use, or the actual use of, military force. The first instance of the use of coercion to achieve its goals was China's invasion of Tibet in 1950. The subsequent 17-Point Agreement was coerced by the threat to continue the advance of the PLA to Lhasa if the Tibetan Government refused to capitulate. Once the 17-Point Agreement was concluded, the PLA established a military headquarters in Lhasa that thereafter provided China with the means to enforce its will in Tibet. All subsequent Chinese programs and proposals were coerced by the presence of Chinese military force in Tibet and the threat to use it. China's military predominance in Tibet was soon employed to eliminate Tibetan opposition represented by the two Prime Ministers, Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi. The Chinese threatened to move more PLA troops into Tibet if the Dalai Lama refused to dismiss the Prime Ministers, both of whom had resisted Chinese interference in Tibetan affairs.

Another example of Chinese coercion and repression was the Democratic Reform campaign, which was used to instill Chinese ideology and to enforce conformity to Chinese dictates. An essential part of the campaign was the *thamzing*, or "struggle" process, which was used to identify, isolate, and repress Tibetan opponents of Chinese control. "Struggle" in the Chinese Communists' doctrine was meant as a cathartic process to allow the lower classes to identify and publicly humiliate and denounce their former

upper class exploiters. The struggle sessions could often degenerate into beatings and even deaths and were often followed by the arrest and imprisonment of those accused.

The Democratic Reform campaign was introduced in eastern Tibet in 1956 and immediately aroused revolt. Even though the Chinese delayed all reform programs for the TAR in 1957 in order to prevent the spread of the revolt to Central Tibet, the campaign was continued in eastern Tibet. This was because the campaign was used as a means of repression. The repressive aspect of the campaign was also demonstrated during the revolt in Central Tibet, when the Chinese readily admitted that military suppression and Democratic Reforms were two aspects of the repression of the revolt.

Democratic Reforms also served to enforce conformity and to recruit collaborators and informers. Tibetan activists and informers served a coercive and repressive function in that they made opposition, even passive opposition, more difficult. Informers instilled an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among Tibetans that divided the Tibetan community and therefore facilitated Chinese control. The Chinese system enforced conformity by rewarding confession and cooperation with leniency while mercilessly repressing opposition. Many thousands of Tibetans who were identified as opponents during *thamzing* or arrested for participation in or support for the revolt were sent to prisons and labor camps. Many Tibetans in prisons and labor camps were worked or starved to death, which served China's goal of the elimination of Tibetan opposition. Imprisonment and ill-treatment including torture in prison has remained one of China's most important tools for repressing opposition and enforcing conformity among Tibetans.

China's coercive and repressive power in Tibet, represented by the PLA, has also been enforced by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) and, since 1984, by the People's Armed Police (PAP). The PSB, which has many Tibetan members, is used to identify and repress opposition while the PAP, which is composed almost exclusively of Chinese, has been used to repress open opposition such as the demonstrations in Lhasa from 1987 to 1989 and the 2008 uprising. The PLA, PSB, and PAP have carried out public executions in Tibet, which are used to intimidate the Tibetan population, and the PLA and PAP have engaged in public displays of military force with the same purpose. Prisoners sentenced to death or imprisonment were driven through the streets in the backs of trucks with placards around their necks and two soldiers on each side holding their heads down to demonstrate to all the price of opposition.

### Propaganda

Propaganda has been a major component of all China's policies and campaigns in Tibet from the earliest times to the present. The PLA's advance into Tibet was accompanied by propaganda units whose purpose it was to defuse resistance by explaining CCP nationalities policies. The PLA units put on dances and dramas of the same type that the communists had used to cultivate support within China. The dances and dramas illustrated the communists' themes of class liberation and, in nationality areas, of the equal treatment of minorities. The PLA was depicted as a disciplined force that would liberate the people while refraining from "taking even a needle or thread"

from them. Tibetans report that PLA officers and CCP cadres insinuated their way into Tibet with promises that they had come only to help Tibetans and would leave when Tibet was more developed. The dance and drama troupes not only performed Chinese songs and dances but also attempted to incorporate Tibetan songs and dances as a demonstration of their respect for Tibetan traditions and culture. After the Chinese became well established in Tibet they formed Tibetan opera troupes intended to convey respect for Tibetan culture while at the same time altering their repertoire to convey communist themes.

The Chinese Communists also made use of a variety of media for propaganda, including newspapers, magazines, books, posters, film, and radio. Newspapers, magazines, and books were published in Chinese and in Tibetan explaining CCP nationalities policies and conveying Chinese propaganda about Tibet. For those who could not read, public readings were held. Posters and even signs made of rocks on hillsides were used to propagate Chinese slogans. Film was also used to impress Tibetans and to convey CCP propaganda. Films were shown by PLA propaganda troupes even in remote areas where most Tibetans had never before seen film. In the absence of theaters, films were shown outdoors on the sides of large buildings. Most of these films were in Chinese, but even though Tibetans could not understand the dialogue, they were able to grasp the main themes. Radio was also extensively broadcast by means of loudspeakers in every street and public place in every town and village in Tibet.

The Chinese also employed mass meetings, rallies, and public ceremonies to convey their message. Chinese Communist holidays were substituted for traditional Tibetan holidays, and Tibetans were required to participate in ceremonies expressing loyalty to China. Neighborhood committee and work unit meetings were the primary forum employed by the Chinese for indoctrination, control, surveillance, inculcation of conformity, and propagation of political campaigns and policies. Tibetans were subjected to intensive propaganda in neighborhood committee meetings. During Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution these meetings could last for several hours almost every evening. Thamzing, held during Democratic Reforms, was another form of public meeting used to convey Chinese propaganda. Tibetans in prison were subjected to indoctrination of even greater intensity. Indoctrination was sometimes conducted all day in prisons, especially in the winter months when outside work was impossible.

Chinese use of propaganda in Tibet was very sophisticated, even if the propaganda itself was very simplistic. Every conceivable method, medium, and format was used to convey Chinese Communist propaganda. Many of the methods employed, especially opera and public ceremonies, combined entertainment with propaganda in order to more subtly convey propaganda themes. While the methods used to convey Chinese propaganda in Tibet were pervasive and sometimes even subtle, the overbearing, inescapable, and often simplistic nature of propaganda made it offensive to many Tibetans and therefore ultimately counterproductive. However there were other Tibetans who learned to recite Chinese propaganda themes as a means of personal survival or self-promotion. Tibetan students trained in China were thoroughly indoctrinated in CCP propaganda and many promoted those themes upon their return to Tibet.

## Nationalities Policy

The fundamental themes of CCP Nationalities Policy were the predominance of class interests over national interests, the equality of nationalities in New China, and minority nationalities' autonomous rights under the system of National Regional Autonomy.

Chinese Communist class theory attempted to teach Tibetans that their loyalty should be based upon class rather than nationality. The Chinese Communists promised that all nationalities in China, whether minority nationalities like the Tibetans or the majority nationality, the Han Chinese, would be treated equally. The Chinese Communists thought that they would be accepted by minority nationalities because they pledged to eliminate the system of exploitation practiced by previous Chinese governments. However, the elimination of exploitation, whether based upon class or nationality, was not as easy as the Communists imagined. The lack of equality was not the only reason that the minority nationalities rejected Chinese rule. Tibetan national identity proved to be much harder to eliminate than the Chinese Communists imagined. CCP Nationality Policy was also fundamentally contradictory in that it encouraged the creation of Chinese national identity while at the same time discouraging the preservation of minority nationality identity.

Chinese Communist Nationality Policy was also contradictory in that it promised nationality autonomy under a Chinese administration. Minority nationalities were supposed to be in charge of their own affairs while at the same time they were being integrated into a Chinese administrative system that allowed little or no deviation from policies decided in Beijing.

By the terms of the 17-Point Agreement, Tibetans were specifically promised extensive autonomous rights, including the preservation of the Tibetan Government and religious system. However, these promises were fundamentally incompatible with the imposition of Chinese rule over Tibet and the incorporation of Tibet within the Chinese political system. Nevertheless, the purpose of Chinese Communist propaganda was to convince Tibetans that they would be allowed autonomy, or essentially that nothing would change, while the ultimate Chinese goal for Tibet was that everything should change.

Propaganda on CCP Nationalities Policies was intended to eliminate Tibetan resistance to the imposition of Chinese rule. Some of this propaganda may have been sincere in that the Chinese Communists actually believed that nationalism, or at least minority nationalism, would inevitably fade away under the socialist system. The Chinese Communists imagined that minorities such as Tibetans would be content under Chinese rule because they would have been liberated from the exploitation of their own upper class and they would be assisted in social reforms and economic development. However, Marxist nationality theory represented a fundamental misunderstanding of

nationalism. National identity has proven stronger than Marx or the Chinese Communists imagined. Some peoples that they designated as minority nationalities, such as Tibetans, proved to have a much stronger national identity than they thought. Tibetan national identity was entirely non-Chinese and was resistant to assimilation. Rather than being diminished, Tibetan national identity and Tibetan nationalism have actually increased under the conditions of Chinese control over Tibet.

### Propaganda Themes

One major purpose of Chinese propaganda to Tibetans was to explain CCP Nationalities Policy. Another primary purpose was to justify Chinese rule over Tibet, which has three main themes. These are that Tibet has always been a part of China, that old Tibet was a feudal Hell on Earth from which Tibetans were liberated by the CCP, and that Chinese policy has been to help develop Tibet socially and economically while taking nothing from Tibet.

In order to justify their "peaceful liberation" of Tibet in 1950 the Chinese Communists claimed that Tibet was already a part of China and had been so since ancient times; therefore, there was no issue of China's invasion or occupation of Tibet or any question about the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet. They tried to extend the date when Tibet had become a part of China as far back into the past as possible in order to eliminate any evidence of Tibetan independence. At first they claimed that Tibet became a part of China during the Tibetan Empire period of the seventh century. When that claim became untenable they settled upon the mid-thirteenth century, when Tibet became a part of the Mongol Empire. The Chinese Communists then maintained that Tibet had always been under Chinese rule since that time, despite evidence to the contrary, especially during the Ming Dynasty and from 1912 to 1950.

China does not now claim that Tibet actually became a part of China during the Tibetan Empire period, only that a "solid foundation for the ultimate founding of a unified nation" was laid and the "inevitable process of the unification of nationalities" predicted by Marxist doctrine was begun. However, the Chinese do attempt to create the impression that relations between the Tibetan Empire and Tang dynasty China were amicable and that in the Sino-Tibetan treaty of 822 the Chinese and Tibetans agreed to "unite their territories as one." However, in the treaty of 822 the "union" of Tibet and China was clearly in the sense of a union only in agreement. The treaty speaks of China and Tibet each guarding the borders of their separate territories. As the treaty says, "All to the east of the boundary is the domain of Great China. All to the west is surely the domain of Great Tibet." The treaty also says that "Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet and Chinese shall be happy in the land of China." In this treaty China and Tibet were clearly regarded as separate countries.

China now claims that Tibet formally became an integral part of China in the 13th century during the Yuan dynasty. However, Tibetan relations with the Mongol emperors were unique, based upon the relationship between spiritual and political leaders, in which the spiritual master was theoretically equal to his political patron. Tibet was allowed a

special autonomous status under the Yuan dynasty. Tibet was a part of the Mongol empire but was not therefore a part of China during the Mongol Yuan dynasty.

The subsequent Han Chinese Ming dynasty had no political authority over Tibet and did not even attempt to exercise any such authority. Nevertheless, despite any evidence, China now claims that Tibet remained a part of China during the Ming. China has to claim that the Ming ruled over Tibet, since otherwise it was only non-Chinese conquest dynasties that had any claim to have done so.

Tibetan relations with the Manchu Qing dynasty were established by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1650. This relationship later evolved into indirect Qing political authority over Tibet, and to some extent direct Qing authority through the *Ambans* stationed in Lhasa. Qing authority over Tibet has been construed by the present Chinese Government as evidence of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. However, Tibet's relationship with the Manchu empire and the Qing dynasty was as a dependent state. Tibetan cultural, ethnic, and national identity was essentially unaffected by Tibetan relations with China during the Qing.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, Tibet declared and achieved de facto independence of China. At the Simla Conference in 1914 Tibet claimed sovereignty over all areas of Tibetan nationality and culture. Tibet maintained its actual independence until 1951, but the Chinese Kuomintang government maintained its claim to sovereignty over Tibet and falsely claimed actual administrative authority there. The present Chinese government claims that China actually exercised authority over Tibet from 1912 until 1951 and that Tibet remained a part of China. However, China has very little evidence to substantiate this claim.

To justify its "liberation" of Tibet, Chinese propaganda claims that Old Tibet was a "dark, barbaric, feudal Hell on Earth" from which Tibetans should be and are grateful to have been liberated by the Chinese Communist Party. China claims that, in old Tibet, Tibetans were oppressed by the feudal serf system and had no human rights. Tibetans gained human rights, they say, only after "liberation" and "Democratic Reforms" under the Chinese Communists.

However, according to Tibetans and foreign travelers to the country before 1950, traditional Tibet was nothing like what the Chinese Communists now claim. The Tibetan Government administered most of Tibet indirectly through traditional leaders, nomadic chieftains, or monasteries and monastic sects. In addition, Tibetans who had served the government were often compensated with estates from which they were allowed to collect labor and taxes rather than being paid directly by the government. Traditional leaders and estate lords had juridical authority over their areas and estates, but, by all accounts, abuses of authority were rare. Neither from Tibetan, Chinese, or foreign accounts of traditional Tibet is one able to find evidence of widespread abuse of Tibetans' human rights. Instead, all accounts speak of the peaceful nature of Tibetan society and the happiness of the Tibetan people, primarily due to the influence of Buddhism. Traditional

leaders and estate lords were generally restrained in their treatment of their tenants for the same reason.

Labor and produce required by landlords from tenants was typically comparable to the taxes required of citizens of any country. In addition, tenants could count on the reserve food stores of the estate lord in times of shortage. Because estate lords and monasteries stored grain and gave it to the people in times of shortage, and Tibetans always gave generously to the poor and beggars, Tibet before 1950 never knew famine or starvation. The Chinese claim that Tibetan society was characterized by extreme inequality, but every society has its inequalities, not least of all Communist Chinese society.

China claims to have liberated Tibetans from the feudal serf system, to have introduced social reforms, and to have provided economic development. China claims that it has eliminated social inequality in Tibet by means of "Democratic Reforms," and eliminated Tibet's poverty and backwardness by "Socialist Transformation" and economic development. China prides itself on building roads in Tibet, providing health care and education, increasing social equality, and assisting in economic development. China implies in its propaganda that these improvements could not have been done by the Tibetans themselves without Chinese assistance and therefore are one of the benefits of, or even justification for, Chinese rule over Tibet.

However, if China were only interested in helping Tibetans it could have provided all of this assistance as foreign aid. China's so-called assistance to Tibet neither necessitated nor justifies the imposition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The roads that were built into Tibet in the early 1950s were primarily for the purpose of consolidating China's logistical and political control in Tibet. The so-called Democratic Reforms that were involuntarily imposed on Tibetans were the means by which China gained title to Tibetans' land and wealth and eliminated all actual and potential resistance to Chinese rule. Tibetans were not taught to exercise the "people's democratic dictatorship" or to be masters of their own fate, as the Chinese claimed, but were taught to fear the Party and the Chinese government and to conform to its dictates.

All of China's social reform and economic development policies in Tibet have had the political purpose of imposing Chinese political control over Tibet and gaining economic control over Tibetans' land, wealth, and production. China has hardly been a disinterested patron and supporter of Tibetan social reform and economic development. On the contrary, Chinese social and economic policies in Tibet have all been intended for Chinese control and Chinese benefit. Chinese social reforms in Tibet were the means by which China gained title to Tibetans' lands and wealth and repressed traditional Tibetan political and religious leaders. Chinese economic reforms in Tibet were primarily a means to gain access to Tibetan agricultural and pastoral production. Chinese economic development in Tibet has been aimed at increasing Chinese political and logistical control over Tibet or has benefited Chinese colonists in Tibet more than Tibetans.



China has spent a great deal to establish and maintain its control over Tibet, but it is untrue that it has taken nothing from Tibet. Exploitation of Tibet's natural resources began with the large-scale cutting of forests, mostly in Kham, which was accessible to Sichuan. Mining of Tibet's mineral resources began mostly in the Tsaidam area of Qinghai in the early days where the exploitation of oil and many other resources was facilitated by the completion of a railroad as far as Golmud. China's exploitation of mineral resources in other areas of Tibet has only recently been facilitated by the completion of the railroad to Lhasa. China has only really begun to access Tibet's mineral resources and has plans for more railways to do so. Hydroelectric power development has also only just begun with great potential to supply power to China and power mining in Tibet. A calculation of how much China has provided to Tibet versus how much it has taken is impossible, but the taking has only begun in earnest due to the difficulties of infrastructure development while what has been provided to Tibet has mostly facilitated Chinese control or benefitted Chinese settlers more than Tibetans.

### Transformative Campaigns

The Chinese Communists used political campaigns to transform social identity among the Chinese people and to transform social, political, and national identity among the national minorities. The two primary campaigns were Democratic Reforms and Socialist Transformation. In addition, an unplanned campaign occurred in the form of the Cultural Revolution. Democratic Reforms and communization were simultaneous in eastern Tibetan areas outside the TAR, beginning in 1958 and causing immediate revolt. Democratic Reforms took place in Central Tibet only after the 1959 revolt. Socialist Transformation, or communization, was a gradual process, except outside the TAR where it was precipitous, beginning with mutual aid teams after the revolt and proceeding through collectivization to communization at different rates in different parts of the TAR, culminating in full communization in all areas by the early 1970s. The Cultural Revolution lasted from 1966 to 1976, with the period 1966-1970 being the most intense.

The political campaign named Democratic Reforms was the Chinese Communists' primary method of social and political transformation. In Chinese areas Democratic Reforms were intended to overthrow the rule of the upper classes and substitute the rule of the workers represented by the CCP. In nationality areas such as Tibet, however, the campaign had nationalist implications. The elimination of the upper class in Tibet meant the elimination of Tibetan nationalist leadership and the imposition of control by the Chinese. Some Tibetans of the upper class were incorporated within the United Front but were entirely subordinate to the Chinese. The same was true for lower-class Tibetans who were recruited as activists and lower-level officials.

The Chinese claimed that Democratic Reforms were implemented voluntarily by the Tibetans themselves in order to overthrow the feudal serf system. China claims that by means of Democratic Reforms Tibetan serfs stood up to become masters of their own fate. However, despite China's claims, the reality was quite different.

First, it is untrue to say that Tibetans demanded or even welcomed Democratic Reforms. The “three pillars of feudalism,” as defined by the Chinese, to be overthrown in Tibet were the Tibetan Government, the aristocracy, and the monasteries. These were the landowners and also the leadership of Tibetan society. The Chinese claimed that they were repressing the feudal exploiters of the Tibetan serfs. But what they were actually doing was repressing the foundations of Tibetan society and eliminating the leadership of the Tibetan people. The result of the campaign was not a transfer of land ownership from Tibetan feudal lords to Tibetan serfs but a transfer of ownership of Tibetans’ lives and property from Tibetans to Chinese.

Democratic Reforms enabled the Chinese to expose and eliminate all Tibetan opponents to Chinese rule. Land redistribution was only one aspect of Democratic Reforms. Land was confiscated and redistributed with much publicity, but the same land would be confiscated during collectivization only three or four years later. However, the repressive aspect of Democratic Reforms, the aspect that was most compatible with the repression of the revolt, was the indoctrination meetings that all Tibetans were required to attend and the thamzing sessions that were a part of those meetings.

Indoctrination meetings allowed the Chinese to control Tibetans both politically and socially and to identify all those who had sympathized with the revolt or who opposed Chinese rule. Those identified as opponents to the Chinese were then subjected to thamzing, a process that served to intimidate and repress not only the person being subjected to the public humiliation and shaming but all participating as well. All present had to condemn the accused since even silence would identify one as an opponent and a possible subject for thamzing oneself. Lamas and other traditional leaders were subjected to thamzing, public humiliation, and arrests. Democratic Reforms and thamzing allowed the Chinese to identify and then eliminate all actual or potential opposition.

Democratic Reforms in Kham and Amdo led to revolt in the east that spread to Central Tibet and resulted in the flight of the Dalai Lama. After the revolt in Lhasa the Chinese arrested all Tibetan Government officials who had been unable to flee. In addition, anyone known to have supported the revolt was arrested. This included many lamas, since most monasteries had in some way supported the revolt. The dissolution of the Tibetan Government and the arrest of all who had supported the revolt replaced Tibetan leadership with Chinese leadership and gave the Chinese political control over Tibet. Democratic Reforms were implemented simultaneous with and in conjunction with suppression of the revolt. The connection between Democratic Reforms and suppression of the revolt reveals the true nature and purpose of Democratic Reforms.

A primary purpose of Democratic Reforms was the redistribution of wealth and property from the exploiting classes to the exploited. Land reform saw the distribution of land titles to peasants when the large estates of the aristocracy and monasteries were confiscated. Confiscated property of the dispossessed exploiting classes was also redistributed to the common people, but Tibetans say that they received only the less valuable items while the Chinese took everything else. Monasteries were considered a major exploiting class; therefore, their physical wealth was confiscated by the Chinese

state. Monasteries were systematically looted of their statues and religious implements made of valuable metals, all of which were trucked to the Chinese interior to be melted down for more utilitarian uses. Less valuable objects like religious texts and scroll paintings were burned, while clay statues were crushed. All of this destruction of Tibet's cultural and religious heritage was justified as a redistribution of property from the Tibetan exploiting classes to the exploited classes, which included not only Tibetans but all of the Chinese people. Since the CCP claimed to represent the people it declared itself authorized to confiscate the wealth of Tibet.

Unlike Democratic Reforms and collectivization, the Cultural Revolution was not planned as a part of the Socialist Transformation process. However, the Cultural Revolution was another attempt on the part of the CCP to transform Chinese society according to socialist principles and ideals. It also reflected the conflict between factions within the CCP and the frustration of Mao and his allies in achieving a radical social and economic transformation of Chinese society. The Cultural Revolution was not originally aimed at minority areas such as Tibet. However, the Maoist and Red Guard slogan to transform the "four olds" made the minority nationalities' traditional societies a particular target. The minority nationalities, such as Tibetans, epitomized the four olds—old thoughts, old habits, old traditions, and old culture—against which the Cultural Revolution was directed. In Han Chinese areas the Cultural Revolution meant the persecution of so-called rightists and the destruction of some cultural relics. However, in Tibet, it meant an attack upon all aspects of Tibetan culture.

During the Cultural Revolution all the most distinguishing characteristics of Tibetan culture were targeted for destruction. Tibetan Buddhism particularly suffered, because to the atheistic Chinese Communists it signified old thinking. Religious monuments and Buddhist monasteries, already emptied of their monks and artworks, were destroyed to liberate the Tibetan people from what the Chinese characterized as feudal superstition. However, Buddhism represented an important part of Tibetan culture, and monasteries were the centers of Tibetan learning and the repositories of Tibetan art. Many other aspects of Tibetan culture were also attacked, including social styles and ceremonies, holidays and celebrations, household styles and decorations, clothing styles, and even the Tibetan language. Tibetans were encouraged and coerced to abandon their own culture in favor of Chinese socialist culture. The Cultural Revolution was intended as a social transformation, but in Tibet it had nationalist implications. The Cultural Revolution in Tibet was an attempt to replace Tibetan culture and Tibetan national identity with Chinese culture and Chinese national identity.

The Cultural Revolution was a disaster for Tibetan culture, which suffered tremendous damage. Nevertheless, despite Chinese attempts to eradicate Tibetan national identity, it survived because of its strength and depth. In some respects Tibetan national identity was even strengthened by the Chinese attack upon it. National identity is often a vague concept and only achieves a clear definition under the conditions of a foreign threat. The Chinese attack upon Tibetan culture and Tibetan national identity served to reinforce for Tibetans exactly what that culture and identity meant to them individually and collectively. Tibetans lost much in terms of material culture during the Cultural

Revolution, but in some ways their cultural identity and cultural ideology may have been strengthened.

The Cultural Revolution represents China's most intense, coercive, and violent attempt to eradicate Tibetan culture and to transform Tibetans into Chinese. The failure to eradicate Tibetan culture and Tibetan national identity during the Cultural Revolution is a testimony to the viability and relevance of Tibetan culture and the strength of Tibetan national identity.

The Socialist Transformation, or collectivization, campaign was of three stages: mutual aid teams, collectives, and communes. Each stage increased the degree of Chinese control over Tibetans' lives and Chinese access to Tibetan economic production. Chinese justifications for collectivization were to achieve economic cooperation and a rational collectivization of agricultural and economic efforts. Communization was the ultimate goal. However, collectivization was implemented in Chinese areas with a haste that led to economic chaos. In Tibet, collectivization was begun in eastern Tibetan areas outside the TAR in 1958 while those areas were already in revolt due to the introduction of Democratic Reforms. Collectivization in eastern Tibet was in fact intended as a means to control the revolt but it only increased Tibetans' resistance to Chinese control. In the TAR, collectivization accompanied Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution and was again employed to increase Chinese control over Tibetan's lives and their economic production. However, the disaster of the Great Leap Forward campaign and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, as well as the irrationality of the Chinese Communists' collectivization program, again led to economic chaos.

The Chinese Communists' collectivization program had political as well as economic goals. The economic goal was to increase economic rationality, planning, and efficiency, none of which was achieved. The political purpose was that collectivization increased government control over all aspects of individuals' lives. Collectivization also gave the government control over agricultural and all other economic production. In Tibet the Chinese were dependent on Tibetan food supplies. This was especially true from 1951 to 1955 before the completion of roads, and from 1959 to 1962 during the Great Leap Forward. Collectivization provided the Chinese with direct access to Tibetan agricultural production and solved the problem for the Chinese of feeding themselves in Tibet.

Collectivization in China began in earnest in 1958 during the Great Leap Forward. Chinese peasants and workers were organized into collectives for agricultural work as well as for vast public works projects such as irrigation, land improvement, and terracing of agricultural fields. Agriculture was concentrated on the production of rice and other grains to the exclusion of all other crops such as seed oils, vegetables, or fruits. The irrationality of CCP policies plus the predominance of public works projects over agriculture led to economic disruptions, food shortages, and finally famine. An estimated 30 million Chinese died of starvation during the 1959-62 famine, a famine that was entirely due to irrational CCP policies plus a political culture of conformity that prevented any officials exposing the failure of the Great Leap.

The chaos and starvation of the Great Leap coincided with the Tibetan revolt, the repression of the revolt and the institution of Democratic Reforms in Tibet. Tibetans, especially those in prisons and labor camps, suffered food shortages and starvation. The chaos of the Great Leap delayed full collectivization and communization for several years, but the process was resumed during the Cultural Revolution. By the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 most Tibetans were in communes. Full communization resulted in another food shortage in the early 1970s. Irrational Chinese policies such as the emphasis upon wheat cultivation at the expense of barley led to further food shortages in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Only in the 1980s after the communes were dissolved did the Tibetan economy improve.

Collectivization did not have the same impact upon Tibetan culture and Tibetan identity as did Democratic Reforms and the Cultural Revolution. Democratic Reforms directly attacked Tibetan political and national identity. The Cultural Revolution directly attacked Tibetan cultural identity. Collectivization did not directly attack Tibetan identity except in the economic sense. Collectivization was intended to further restrict Tibetan autonomy and to increase Chinese control over all aspects of Tibetans' lives. However, collectivization was not intended as a cultural transformation campaign, except in the sense that Tibetans were supposed to become communists. In addition, since communization was only temporary, its impact upon Tibetan identity was probably less damaging than either Democratic Reforms or the Cultural Revolution.

Collectivization was the last of the three Chinese Communist social and economic transformation campaigns. Democratic Reforms, the Cultural Revolution, and Socialist Transformation were, along with Chinese ideological indoctrination, the primary political campaigns employed by the Chinese to transform Tibetan cultural and national identity. In addition, the social and economic transformation campaigns were the primary forum for ideological indoctrination. Tibetans were subjected to the most intense ideological indoctrination during the Democratic Reform process, during the Cultural Revolution, and within communes.

### Autonomy or Assimilation

China has pursued policies of relative autonomy or assimilation in Tibet as conditions have changed, usually coinciding with periods of rightist or leftist predominance in Chinese Communist Party politics. Leftists have more actively tried to assimilate Tibetans, that is, to make Tibetans give up their own culture and identity in favor of Chinese culture and identity, whereas periods of rightist influence were usually more tolerant of minority nationality autonomy.

In general, 1950 to 1957 was a relative liberal or rightist period in Chinese Communist politics and of relative tolerance for minority nationality autonomy, at least in Tibet. The period from the anti-rightist and anti-local nationalist campaign of late 1957 and the Great Leap Forward campaign from 1958 to 1961 was an extreme leftist period. 1962 to 1966 was a relatively liberal or rightist period, except that in Tibet it coincided

with the radical transformation of Tibetan society after the Chinese assumption of complete control after the 1959 revolt. The Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 was an extreme leftist period. The death of Mao in 1976 inaugurated another relatively liberal period that lasted until 1989. Since 1989 the Chinese Communist Party has become more leftist due to the threat that it perceives to its own existence. Tibet policy has been less tolerant of autonomy due to the lesson that the Chinese have learned that whenever they allow any semblance of autonomy in Tibet it results in a revival of Tibetan religion and culture and a resurgence of Tibetan nationalism.

In the early 1950s the Chinese Communists had great faith in the efficacy of their minority nationality policies. They thought that they could convince the minority nationalities that their nationality consciousness was simply misplaced class consciousness. They also believed that they could allow some autonomy, at least temporarily, because the natural trend was for the nationalities to assimilate to Chinese socialist culture. In Tibet the Chinese were very careful to allow the semblance of Tibetan autonomy while they went about the process of gaining logistical and political control. They made the mistake, however, of regarding Tibetan areas outside the TAR as not really Tibet and of instituting the process of Democratic Reforms there in 1958.

1956 was the year that Mao decided that minority nationalities, with the exception of Tibetans within the TAR, should not be denied the benefits of Democratic Reforms and Socialist Transformation. Previously, the minorities had been considered unprepared for socialist reforms, but Mao denounced this as equivalent to “looking down on the national minorities.” When the leftist period began in late 1957, after the Hundred Flowers campaign, Anti-Local Nationalism was included as a part of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. “Local nationalism” was the terminology that the CCP used to distinguish the remnants of minority nationalities’ nationalism from that of that of the Chinese state, of which they were a part. The Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign reflected the leftists’ dissatisfaction with nationality resistance to socialist reforms. At the beginning of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 most minority nationalities, with the exception of Tibetans inside the TAR, were subjected to the same collectivist campaigns as were the Chinese. This only exacerbated the revolt in eastern Tibet.

After the disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward the rightists in the CCP once again became predominant, at least temporarily. However, in Tibet this was hardly a time of more liberal policies. This period in Tibet was one of repression of resistance, institution of Democratic Reforms, and the beginnings of collectivization. Even in China this period was very brief, lasting only from 1962 to 1966.

In 1966 Mao and the leftists made a comeback. The subsequent Cultural Revolution was a time of the most intense pressures on Chinese to conform to socialist ideals and on minority nationalities to conform to Chinese socialist culture. In Tibet the Cultural Revolution also saw the intentional destruction of Tibetan cultural monuments and the repression of Tibetan cultural distinctiveness.

The death of Mao in 1976 ended the Cultural Revolution. A liberalization of cultural and political policies was instituted that only really began in Tibet in 1979. In 1979 Deng Xiaoping initiated contacts with the Tibetan exiles in a meeting with Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, in which Deng reportedly said that "anything but independence can be discussed." Tibetans interpreted this to mean that the terms of Tibetan autonomy, up to but not including independence, could be negotiated. However, judging from China's actual position in subsequent talks, what Deng really meant was that no political issues could be discussed, given that all such issues were based upon the Tibetan claim to pre-1950 independence. China entertained a series of talks with Tibetan exile representatives in the early 1980s, along with several fact-finding missions, but refused to discuss anything but the personal status of the Dalai Lama and his possible return to China.

Chinese Premier Hu Yaobang visited Tibet in May 1980 and promised to dissolve the communes, reduce the number of Chinese in Tibet by 85 percent, and allow Tibetans to exercise full autonomy. The promise of Tibetan autonomy was premised on the assumption that Tibetan religion was marginalized, that Tibetan nationalism was eradicated, and that Tibetans were substantially acculturated to Chinese socialist culture and loyal to China and the socialist system. The Chinese were considerably surprised, therefore, when liberalization and autonomy in Tibet led to a rapid revival of Tibetan religion, culture, and nationalism. Tibetans devoted much more of their efforts and resources to the reconstruction of monasteries than the Chinese expected and these revived monasteries became the centers of traditional Tibetan culture and of a renewed Tibetan nationalism. At the same time, Tibet opened to the outside world and Tibetans found that they had support from the Tibetan exile and international communities. Tibet also became an international political issue, and Chinese policies and propaganda about Tibet were challenged both internally and internationally.

The Chinese imagined that Tibetans were grateful for having been liberated from feudal serfdom. They imagined that Tibetans had abandoned their religion after many years of education about its evils. However, Tibetans quickly revived Tibetan Buddhism and reconstructed their monasteries and religious monuments. Most Tibetans abandoned any pretense of belief in Chinese socialism or any attraction to Chinese culture. Tibetans preferred their own culture despite constant Chinese denigration.

Faced with an unexpected revival of Tibetan religion, culture, and nationalism, the Chinese very quickly reneged on their promises of autonomy in Tibet. The 1984 Second Tibet Work Conference adopted a new economic development policy that reversed the policy on the reduction of the numbers of Chinese in Tibet. From 1979 to 1983 the numbers of Chinese officials in Tibet had actually been reduced, but after 1984 the numbers again increased. The new Chinese arrivals in Tibet included many private entrepreneurs as well as workers and experts deemed necessary for development projects. By 1987 Tibetans' increased nationalistic sentiments led to demonstrations and riots in Lhasa. In response, the Chinese abandoned their liberalization policies and placed further restrictions on Tibetan autonomy. In 1987 Deng Xiaoping declared the end to the policy

of restricting the numbers of Chinese in Tibet, maintaining that Chinese were necessary for development.

The period of relative liberalization in Chinese policies from 1979 to 1989 may be said to have been an experiment that failed. The Chinese discovered that they could not trust Tibetans' loyalty and, therefore, they could not allow them to administer Tibet for themselves or even have any substantial degree of cultural or religious autonomy. Having found autonomy infeasible, the Chinese reverted to the traditional colonization policy. Only Chinese colonists would be totally loyal to China; only colonization could forever secure Tibet as Chinese territory. Colonization is China's traditional policy for absorption of frontier territories and peoples. The promise of autonomy was often used to persuade frontier peoples to accept a nominal Chinese control, after which autonomy was eliminated, direct Chinese control was instituted, and Chinese colonists were introduced. Chinese control of Tibet has followed this traditional pattern.

Marxist nationalities policy always assumed that autonomy was a temporary expedient. Even when the Chinese have attempted to allow some degree of autonomy, they have found that autonomy is incompatible with Chinese security needs and the ultimate goal of assimilation. The Chinese found that Tibetan autonomy was incompatible with the maintenance of Chinese rule over Tibet. Therefore they had no alternative but to restrict Tibetan autonomy and to accelerate the ultimate goal of the colonization and assimilation of Tibet.

In its propaganda China claims that Tibetans enjoy full autonomy and human rights. It admits to some cultural destruction in the past but blames it on the Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four. China maintains that autonomy has been the norm in Tibet, whereas cultural repression was an aberration confined to the period of the Cultural Revolution. However, Chinese policy in Tibet has always combined cultural repression, assimilation, and colonization with a small and very highly restricted degree of cultural autonomy.

Chinese policy in Tibet has varied according to the factional conflicts within the CCP. Relative emphasis upon autonomy or assimilation has varied along with these shifts in Chinese politics. Tibetans have been allowed a modicum of autonomy at some times, particularly during the 1950s before the Chinese gained full control in Tibet and after 1979 when the Chinese believed they could allow autonomy in Tibet because Tibetan religion and Tibetan nationalism had been substantially eliminated. Autonomy has not been the norm in Chinese policy in Tibet with cultural repression being an aberration; rather, autonomy has been an aberration whereas repression, assimilation, and colonization have been the norm.

#### Current Chinese Policy in Tibet

Tibetan discontent with the abrogation of Chinese promises to allow autonomy, combined with the rise of Tibetan nationalism and the internationalization of the Tibet political issue by the Dalai Lama in exile, led to demonstrations and riots from 1987 to



1989 and the imposition of martial law in March 1989. Then the June 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement and subsequent massacre led to the end of all experiments with liberalism within the CCP and in the PRC. Since then, any Chinese who has suggested that Tibet be allowed any meaningful degree of autonomy has surely been met with a reminder of the results of the liberalization period of the 1980s. Chinese hardliners have also cited the similar if shorter-lived liberalization of 1957, when similar promises of autonomy and reduction of Han personnel were made, as having led to the revolt of 1959. These two examples are considered sufficient evidence that Tibetan autonomy can never be allowed lest it lead to Tibetan nationalism and separatism.

Post 1989 Chinese policy in Tibet may be said to be composed of three parts. First is to pursue the economic development of Tibet, partly to dilute Tibetans' anti-Chinese sentiments and partly to facilitate Chinese military and logistical control. Second is colonization, which is supported by economic development and has been China's solution for frontier problems throughout its history of expansion and unification. The third part of China's policy in Tibet is to severely limit all aspects of Tibetan autonomy, even cultural autonomy, since almost all aspects of Tibetan culture are recognized to have nationalist implications. These policies are enforced with severe repression of any manifestations of Tibetan separatism.

Economic development in Tibet is meant to help Tibetans to the extent that some can be bought off with incentives for cooperation, but the primary purpose is to consolidate Chinese control over Tibet and support the exploitation of Tibet's natural resources and, ultimately, Chinese colonization. Chinese colonization of Tibet was hampered in the early years after "liberation" by the difficulty of supporting large numbers of Chinese there and, to some extent, at least in the TAR, due to lingering respect for Tibetan autonomy.

Hu Yaobang's 1980 promise to limit the number of Chinese in Tibet lasted only until 1984, and in 1987 Deng Xiaoping declared that the CCP would no longer "judge the success of its Tibet policy based upon the number of Chinese in Tibet," which signified that China would no longer feel any obligation to respect Tibetan autonomy. This policy was linked to the need for economic development but was also an admission that the experiment with autonomy in the 1980s had convinced the Chinese that they could not trust Tibetans and therefore they would have to pursue a colonization strategy for national security reasons.

In 1992, CCP Secretary in Tibet in 1992, Chen Kuiyuan, publicly opposed any consideration for Tibet's "special characteristics," which are the code words used by the Chinese since the 1950s to identify those aspects of Tibetan culture and history that are different from Chinese culture and history and that justify treating Tibet differently from Han Chinese areas. In other words, Tibet's special characteristics are the reason why Tibetans are supposed to be allowed the cultural autonomy granted to them by the PRC Constitution and by the 17-Point Agreement of 1951. Chen's refusal to consider Tibet's special characteristics was equivalent to an official denial of any Tibetan autonomous rights.

In an important speech on Tibetan literature and art, Chen Kuiyuan also attempted to revive the Marxist class theory on nationalism and national culture. This theory, epitomized by Mao's leftist formula that the national question is in essence a class question, was employed in the most oppressive eras of Chinese Communist nationality policy, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. Chen claimed that class struggle was far from being over in Tibet. As Chen said, quoting Jiang Zemin, "In the primary stage of socialism, class contradictions, due to international and domestic factors, will still exist within a certain scope for a long time to come." Chen complained that international and domestic critics had accused China of trying to destroy Tibetan culture and religion and to eliminate the Tibetan nation in a flood of Chinese migration. Chen claimed that such criticism proved that class struggle was still prevalent within Tibet and internationally.

Chen identified the most salient aspects of Tibetan culture, including religion and language, as the culture of the old feudal class. He defined this old culture as incompatible with the culture of the Tibetan working people and new socialist Tibet. He suggested that Tibetan working people should adopt Chinese "socialist spiritual civilization," which was the CCP political slogan of the time. Chen said that this was not a national issue, or an issue of autonomy or religion, but simply an attempt to eliminate the feudal aspects of Tibetan culture that hindered modernization.

China's strategy of economic development, denial of autonomy, and colonization was ratified at the 1994 Third Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing. The Forum's themes were development and stability, as was evident in the title of the final document, "Decision to Accelerate Development and Maintain Stability in Tibet." The cultural implications of development were clearly on the minds of the Chinese leaders, as was indicated in remarks by Jiang Zemin: "While paying attention to promoting Tibet's fine traditional culture, it is also necessary to absorb the fine cultures of other nationalities in order to integrate the fine traditional culture with the fruits of modern culture. This will facilitate the development of socialist new culture in Tibet."

Another Third Tibet Work Forum decision was to characterize the competition with the Dalai Lama as an "antagonistic contradiction with the enemy." What this meant was that there could be no compromise and no reconciliation as there might have been in regard to a "nonantagonistic contradiction among the people." These were the two types of contradictions set out by Mao in his 1957 "On Contradictions" speech, which was part of the Hundred Flowers movement. At that time, the problem of "local nationalism" in regard to Tibetans and other national minorities, particularly Uyghurs, was defined as nonantagonistic.

The Third Work Forum also set out an uncompromising line on the restriction of religion and the political activities of monks and nuns. The new CCP Tibet policy made it evident that the Chinese Government no longer had any intention of negotiating with the Dalai Lama and no longer had any desire for him to return, although it remained official policy that he would be allowed to return if he renounced his previous traitorous

activities. After the 1994 Tibet Work Forum the Dalai Lama was criticized in the harshest terms and his denunciation was made part of the loyalty test for Tibetan cadres.

The Chinese Government demonstrated its animosity toward the Dalai Lama in late 1995 in the affair of the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The previous Panchen died in January 1989 under suspicious circumstances. Tibetans suspected poison because the Panchen had become increasingly outspoken about Chinese policies and their effects upon Tibetan culture and national identity. In the beginning of the reincarnation discovery process the Chinese, or at least some Chinese and Tibetan officials, seemed inclined to cooperate with the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's recognition would, of course, give the chosen candidate legitimacy and credibility.

However, when the Dalai Lama unilaterally announced his selection the cooperation broke down. The Chinese Government was thereafter determined to reject the Dalai Lama's candidate and to choose their own in order to demonstrate their authority to approve the reincarnation. China's selection of its own Panchen Lama set a pattern for Chinese control over Tibet by means of reincarnations of Tibetan lamas, including that of the Dalai Lama when the time came. An intense anti-Dalai Lama campaign was begun within Tibet, a campaign whose virulence made it obvious that China no longer wanted the Dalai Lama to return or intended to cooperate with him in any way.

Until that time the Chinese had denounced the Dalai Lama's political role but had refrained from criticism of his religious role. Now, however, even his religious role came under criticism. The Chinese needed to justify their selection of the new Panchen Lama without the Dalai Lama's approval. To do this they needed to reduce the Dalai Lama's religious authority. The anti-Dalai Lama campaign made it obvious that the Chinese intended to eradicate Tibetan national symbols and Tibetan national identity.

Shortly after the Panchen Lama affair the Chinese instituted a Patriotic Education Campaign in monasteries and nunneries. The purpose of the Patriotic Education Campaign was to transform Tibetan national identity into Chinese identity, to eradicate Tibetans' loyalty to the Dalai Lama, and to cultivate Tibetan loyalty to China. The Patriotic Education Campaign was initiated in monasteries because the monasteries and nunneries were identified as the centers of the revival of Tibetan nationalism. Work teams of CCP cadres were sent to spend three months or more in monasteries. These work teams instructed monks and nuns in the Chinese version of Tibetan history, forced them to denounce the Dalai Lama, and required them to adhere to Chinese Government regulations and restrictions on religion.

Monks and nuns were required to study four books during compulsory study sessions. The first of the four indoctrination books was about the Chinese version of the history of Tibet, which is that Tibet began the natural and inevitable process of merging of nationalities during the Tibetan Empire period and that Tibet became a part of China during the Mongol Yuan dynasty. Tibet was already a part of China in 1950; therefore, there is no issue of Tibetan independence or a Chinese invasion of Tibet. The Chinese

also claim to have appointed Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas since the Manchu Qing dynasty and therefore are justified in having recently appointed their own Panchen Lama. The “idea of Tibetan independence” was characterized as entirely the creation of foreign imperialists.

The second book was about the Dalai Lama’s splittist activities, the feudal nature of old Tibet, the inevitability of Tibet’s union with China, and the necessity of preserving that unity so that Tibet might develop and prosper. This book attempted to turn Tibetans against the Dalai Lama by accusing him of supporting Tibetan independence, which Tibetans should oppose because Tibet is so obviously better off as a part of China. The third and fourth books were about the Chinese legal system, regulations on the practice of religion and the restrictions imposed upon monasteries, and justifications for the Patriotic Education Campaign. These books were intended to convince Tibetans that they have freedom of religion, while at the same time explaining to them the restrictions under which monasteries must operate.

At the end of the study sessions, monks and nuns were tested on the contents of these four books and made to memorize the required answers about Tibet’s history as a part of China, the Dalai Lama’s splittist activities, China’s legal system, and Chinese regulations on religious practice. The first question on the examination was about the reasons for the Patriotic Education Campaign. The required answer was that the campaign was necessary for the unification of the motherland, political stability, solidarity between nationalities, and the struggle against separatists. Tibetans were instructed that they had no alternative but to unify with other nationalities in the great family of the motherland. This question was in keeping with the Chinese attempt to characterize Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule as local or narrow nationalism, implying a narrow-minded, backward, and reactionary attitude. Tibetan “local nationalism” was condemned for its failure to uphold the equality of all nationalities, to maintain fraternal relations between nationalities, and for stirring up the prejudice of one nationality against another. Tibetan nationalism was also characterized as the attitude of distorting past and present nationality relations, and of emphasizing the difference between nationalities rather than their common character.

Having established the justifications for the Patriotic Education Campaign, the next question effectively required monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama. The question required Tibetans to repeat the characterizations of the Dalai Lama as “the head of the splittist clique that is plotting the independence of Tibet, a faithful tool of international powers that oppose China, the main source of social unrest in Tibet and the biggest obstacle to the establishment of a normal order in Tibetan Buddhism.”

The significance of China’s Patriotic Education Campaign in Tibetan monasteries and nunneries, and later in secular society as well, is that this campaign reveals exactly what the Chinese want Tibetans to believe about their own history, about Tibet’s relationship with China, about the supposed evils of Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama’s splittism, and about the inevitability and advantage of Tibet’s union with China. Those monks or nuns who resisted this indoctrination or who failed the tests were

subjected to punishments such as expulsion or even imprisonment. Many monks were expelled during this process, either because they refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or because they failed to adhere to Chinese regulations on religion, such as that no one below the age of 18 could become a monk or nun.

In 2000 China's State Council released an official "White Paper on Tibetan Culture" in response to the Dalai Lama's statements that China was guilty of destroying Tibetan culture. The Chinese Government accused the Dalai Lama of telling "wild lies" in order to please his supporters in Western countries. The Chinese press said that the Dalai Lama's lies proved that he was no real Buddha. The White Paper refuted the Dalai Lama's charges of cultural genocide in Tibet, saying that the only aspects of Tibetan culture that had been discarded were those that hindered Tibet's social and economic development, while those aspects of Tibetan culture that were favored by the majority of Tibetan people had been preserved. The White Paper claimed that Tibetans had stood up and become masters of their country and masters of themselves and that they now enjoyed the greatest freedom and democracy in the history of Tibet.

The Chinese White Paper blamed the Tibetan feudal serf system for creating an isolated and unchanging culture that inhibited social, scientific, technological, and cultural progress. It maintained that after the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet the Chinese Government had "attached great importance to the protection and development of the fine aspects of Tibetan culture." After Democratic Reforms a new era in the social and cultural development of Tibet was begun in which the upper-class monopoly on Tibetan culture was ended and all Tibetans were allowed to participate in the preservation and development of Tibetan culture.

The White Paper said that culture is not a static, dead thing that never changes, but that it must change in order to progress and survive. The Dalai Lama wanted Tibet to return to the past in order to restore his own privileges. Tibetans themselves chose and implemented the cultural changes that Tibet had experienced since 1950. The elimination of the Tibetan feudal serf system and the Tibetan serf-owners' monopoly over Tibetan culture was necessary so that ordinary Tibetans could gain control over their own culture. Furthermore, Tibetans had voluntarily abandoned the decadent and backward aspects of Tibetan feudal culture, while at the same time religious freedom was protected and the fine aspects of Tibetan culture had been preserved. The overthrow of the old feudal system was inevitable and necessary for Tibetans to achieve cultural freedom.

The Dalai Lama was said to be critical of cultural developments in Tibet only because the extinction of the feudal system and the freedom of Tibetans were incompatible with his continued rule. As the White Paper said, "Without such extinction it would be impossible to emancipate and develop Tibetan society and culture, the ordinary Tibetan people would be unable to obtain the right of mastering and sharing the fruits of Tibet's cultural development, and it would be impossible for them to enjoy real freedom." The White Paper defended cultural change as a natural result of social, economic, and political development: "The fine cultural traditions with Tibetan features are being carried forward and promoted in the new age while the decayed and backward

things in the traditional culture that are not adapted to social development are being sifted out. It is a natural phenomenon in conformity with the law of cultural development and a manifestation of the prosperity and development of Tibetan culture in the new situation.”

The White Paper claimed, “In old Tibet, cultural relic protection was virtually nonexistent. But since the Democratic Reform, the Central People’s Government has attached great importance to the protection of cultural relics in Tibet.” Also, “The Central People’s Government and the government of the TAR have all along paid special attention to respect for and protection of the freedom of religious belief and normal religious activities of the Tibetan people. Since the Democratic Reform, religion-related cultural relics and historical sites, monasteries and temples have been well preserved.” This claim, of course, is totally contrary to the reality of the theft and destruction of Tibetan relics that was a primary aspect of the Democratic Reform campaign and the cultural destruction that was characteristic of the Cultural Revolution.

The TAR had supposedly paid great attention to maintaining and safeguarding the Tibetan people’s right to study, use, and develop their spoken and written language. The White Paper claimed that folk customs and freedom of religious belief were respected and protected. However, it admitted that “some decayed, backward old customs that bear a strong tinge of the feudal serf system have been abandoned, which reflects the Tibetans’ pursuit of modern civilization and the continuous development of Tibetan culture in the new era.”

In 2000 China embarked upon a new strategy of western development to solve its nationality problems in Tibet and Xinjiang. Li Dezhu, director of the Nationality Affairs Commission of the State Council, extolled the western development strategy as a “new and important historical step taken on the road to bringing about common development and prosperity for all nationalities.” According to an article by Li, “Implementation of the strategy of large-scale development of western China is the necessary choice for solving China’s nationality problems under the new historical conditions.”

China’s nationality problems were said to be due to the lack of economic and cultural development in national minority areas. The article quoted Jiang Zemin as saying that the resolution of China’s nationality problems could be achieved by means of two major historical transformations. The first “is to lead each of the liberated nationalities to walk the road of socialism through transformation of the social system.” The second “is to speed up economic and social development of each nationality by means of socialist construction.” The first historical task had already been achieved, according to the article, through the implementation of Democratic Reforms and Socialist Transformation. The second historical task, the economic development of the national minorities, was supposed to be achieved by means of the western development strategy.

The Nationality Affairs Commission article acknowledged that not only was the western development campaign necessary for harmonious nationality relations in China but that harmonious nationality relations were necessary for the success of the western development campaign. The article reverted to a new version of the Maoist “the national

issue is in essence a class issue” formula to explain the nationality question: “The nature of nationality relations is essentially a relationship between workers.” In other words, the relationship between nationalities is not about nationality but about class. Claiming that China had abolished the old relations of exploitation and oppression, the article said that China had essentially resolved all nationality issues. The only issues remaining were those left over from history, due to the remaining influence of backward nationality habits such as religion or due to the anti-China activities of hostile foreigners.

The article blamed any remnants of negative nationality relations on the legacy of history, that is, before “liberation.” Other problems were supposedly due to the remaining backward influences of religion and the association of religion with nationalism. Other issues were acknowledged to have arisen due to local disputes about resource usage, which could be exacerbated by increased western development. Any other problems were credited to hostile foreign forces in collusion with disgruntled exiles and a small minority of internal separatists.

The solution to all problems, the article said, is economic development and the creation of a unified Chinese socialist economy, within which nationality unity will be the inevitable result. Nationalities were not to be allowed freedom in economic development, however, since that might harm socialist relations and national unity. Instead, economic development must be directed by the central authorities. The article acknowledged that the western development campaign would lead to population transfer from east to west, but this would promote cultural exchange and raise the cultural level of the western regions. There might be some changes in the proportions of nationalities in some areas, with the potential for conflict if nationality relations were not handled well. The article advised national minorities that cultures cannot develop in isolation and that China’s national minorities must assimilate the cultural traditions of the Han nationality and other advanced nationalities.

### Chinese Policy Update

Chinese policy in Tibet has changed very little since this series of programs was written in the year 2000. Fundamentals of that policy remain economic development, repression of dissent, denial of autonomy, and colonization. Chinese policy combines strong incentives for cooperation with severe disincentives for noncooperation. Tibetans who cooperate with the Chinese regime can prosper or at least avoid persecution, while any opposition is met with relentless repression. Chinese leaders seem confident that this policy contains the key to their Tibet problem, as evidenced by their unwillingness to make any sincere effort to dialogue with the Dalai Lama or to make any concessions on the terms of their Tibet policy.

Significant developments have included an abortive 10-year dialogue process that was little more than pretense, completion of the railroad into Tibet in 2006 that led to an increase in the numbers of Chinese, the 2008 uprising that reflected Tibetan discontent and the subsequent Chinese repression, and a desperate attempt by Tibetans to protest their situation by means of self-immolations. The 2008 uprising has apparently led to a

final Chinese determination that no significant Tibetan autonomy can be allowed without leading to a revival of Tibetan nationalism and separatism. One of the most important developments in regard to the transformation of Tibetan identity has been the huge increase in Chinese tourism.

Another series of Sino-Tibetan talks was initiated in 2002, again by Chinese contacts with Gyalo Thondup. Annual meetings were held thereafter until 2008, which greatly raised the hopes of Tibetans but in which China adhered to its policy of discussing nothing but the personal status of the Dalai Lama. While the Tibetan exile administration characterized the talks as official dialogues between itself and the Chinese government, the Chinese side described the contacts as private talks with the personal representatives of the Dalai Lama. Nothing came of these talks except that, in order to create a “conducive atmosphere” for negotiations, Dharamsala was seduced into advising Tibetan exiles against demonstrations against the international travels of Chinese officials that might embarrass them.

While the Tibetan exiles were engaged in wishful thinking about China’s willingness to compromise on the terms of Tibetan autonomy, China was engaged in policies designed to solidify its logistical position in Tibet, particularly the completion of the railroad to Lhasa in 2006. China had dreamed of a railroad to Tibet since the earliest days of its conquest but had been unable to overcome physical obstacles, particularly extensive areas of permafrost along the route in the northern areas of the plateau known as the Changthang, or “northern plain.” The final completion of the railroad was celebrated as a great success by the Chinese, while many Tibetans regarded it as the end of any prospect for the preservation of a separate Tibetan culture or national identity. It resulted in an immediate increase in the numbers of Chinese in Tibet, particularly tourists, who from this time began to supplant foreign tourists, as well as a consolidation of Chinese logistical and military control over Tibet.

The completion of the railroad, as well as the lack of any progress in negotiations, increased Tibetan discontent to the point that demonstrations broke out in March 2008, leading to a full-scale riot in Lhasa and demonstrations and riots in many places in Tibet, particularly in eastern areas outside the TAR where the Chinese imagined that Tibetans were more assimilated and where policies had been more liberal based upon that assumption. The intensity and extent of what the Tibetans came to call the “2008 Uprising” shocked the Chinese and caused them to initiate a severe repression of protesters and dissidents, denial of any sort of Tibetan autonomy, revival of the Patriotic Education Campaign, and a final termination of talks with Dharamsala.

Tibetans both internally and in exile admitted that they had hoped to exploit Chinese sensitivity about the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympics as an opportunity to demonstrate to China and the world their discontent with Chinese policies. The uprising did embarrass China, which was anxious to present a favorable face to the world before and during the Olympics, and achieved considerable international attention, including the threats of several foreign leaders to boycott the Olympic opening ceremonies in protest. China then initiated an emergency meeting with Dharamsala’s negotiating team and



promised a further meeting in July just before the August Olympics. This seemingly conciliatory step was sufficient to get foreign leaders to withdraw their threats of protest, thus achieving China's purpose without having to make any real concessions. The meeting in July led to little except a perhaps unintentional Chinese invitation to the Tibetans to clearly define what they really meant by the demand for "genuine autonomy."

Dharamsala responded with an extensive "Memorandum on Tibetan Autonomy," for the next meeting in December 2008, in which they essentially adhered to the existing Chinese policies contained in the Regional ethnic Autonomy Law, hoping only that China would actually respect its own law. The only significant deviation was a request that all Tibetan autonomous regions, districts, and counties should be united in one "Greater Tibetan Autonomous Region," which was actually consistent with the CCP's original policy that all contiguous minority nationality areas should form one autonomous region. However, despite the reasonable and rational nature of Tibetan proposals, they were not just rejected but scornfully so, revealing that China's seemingly conciliatory attitude was nothing more than a ploy to defuse international protests in regard to Tibet before the Olympics. China also terminated the dialogue at this time and has shown no interest in its revival since.

Since 2008 China has intensified its repressive measures in Tibet, including no tolerance for dissent or the autonomous rights that its own laws ostensibly guarantee. Many Tibetans were arrested after the uprising or in the subsequent purge of dissidents, and many received long prison sentences. Patriotic Education resumed based upon the apparent Chinese belief that Tibetans could be turned against the Dalai Lama if his separatist ideology and subversive activities were revealed. The Chinese seemed mystified once again why Tibetans would prefer their own culture, identity, and loyalties over the political security and economic rewards offered for loyalty to China and the CCP. China became intolerant of any manifestations of Tibetan identity, including language. Voluntary and private Tibetan language classes were suppressed due to fear that they could become breeding grounds for nationalism and separatism. Given the unavailability of any other form of political expression, Tibetans responded with a series of horrific self-immolations. China also revealed its intention to recognize its own 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama when the time comes, which declared with finality its ultimate strategy for resolving the Tibet issue.

One of the most ominous developments in regard to the preservation of Tibetan identity versus China's attempt to transform it has been the huge increase in the numbers of Chinese tourists. Statistics for the 2015-2016 period show some 13 million tourists coming to Tibet, although some exaggeration is possible due to the practice of counting tourists at each place they visit. Plans are to increase the numbers to 20 million, which would mean a constant presence in Lhasa of as many Chinese tourists as Tibetans. Domestic tourists make up more than 99 percent, with the numbers of foreign tourists, once important since they tended to sympathize with Tibetans and to convey their story to the outside world, declining into insignificance.

Facilities for Chinese tourists include an elaborate theatrical performance of the story of Princess Wencheng, who came to Tibet in the seventh century and whom the Chinese credit with bringing Buddhism and the arts of civilization as well as laying the foundation for the ultimate and inevitable merging of the Han and Tibetan nationalities. Tibet has been turned into a theme park of sorts for Chinese tourists, who learn that Tibet has always been a part of China and that Tibetans are grateful for their peaceful liberation from feudalism and are happy and relatively prosperous, mostly due to Chinese generosity. China's transformation of Tibet into domestic tourist destination makes Tibetans unwilling performers in the suppression and transformation of their own national identity and confirms their role in China as nothing more than a colorful and exotic ethnic minority.

### Conclusions

China has traditionally expanded its territory by the incorporation and assimilation of frontier territories and peoples. Before 1950 most educated Chinese were taught that Tibet had begun that process of incorporation and assimilation and was therefore already Chinese territory. The Chinese Communists inherited that attitude toward Tibet and they also acquired Marxist-Leninist theories and policies on minority nationalism that promoted assimilation. They believed that Tibetans were estranged from China only because of mistreatment by previous Chinese administrations or the intrigues of foreign imperialism. And they thought that they had the theories and policies to eliminate Tibetans' desires for separation and to create Tibetan loyalty to China. The Chinese Communists promoted policies that supposedly guaranteed Tibetan autonomy, but these were considered a temporary expedient until Tibetans could be convinced to abandon their backward feudal culture in favor of the more advanced Chinese socialist culture. Their plan for the integration and transformation of Tibet necessarily implied the eventual elimination of Tibetan culture and Tibetan national identity, but the Chinese Communists assumed that this would be a voluntary process.

The Chinese Communists' policies for the transformation of Tibet included a nationalities policy that promised autonomy, and political campaigns such as Democratic Reforms and Socialist Transformation intended to eliminate that same autonomy. They intended to respect Tibetan autonomy until Tibetans could be persuaded to voluntarily request socialist reforms. However, the Chinese greatly underestimated the strength of Tibetan culture, Tibetan national identity, and Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. Chinese impatience also played a role in the decision to accelerate the process of transformation in Tibet. The involuntary imposition of Democratic Reforms in eastern Tibet led to violent resistance and the need for violent suppression, as well as the spread of the revolt to Central Tibet.

While still ostensibly adhering to the provisions of the 17-Point Agreement that allowed for Tibetan autonomy, the Chinese set up a variety of new social and political organizations that were intended to transfer political power from Tibetans to Chinese. The Chinese Communists also employed propaganda as one of their primary tools for the

transformation of Tibet. They made use of a variety of media for propaganda, including newspapers, magazines, books, posters, film, drama, and radio. Every conceivable method, medium, and format was used to convey Chinese Communist propaganda. The primary themes were that Tibet has always been a part of China, that old Tibet was a feudal Hell on Earth from which Tibetans should be grateful to have been liberated, and that China has helped Tibet develop socially and economically while taking nothing in return.

The 1959 revolt and the subsequent dissolution of the former Tibetan Government allowed the Chinese to implement their plans for the socialist transformation of Tibet. Democratic Reforms were employed to eliminate the former political and religious leadership and to identify and repress all Tibetan opposition. During the Socialist Transformation process, which included collectivization and communization, they increased political control over Tibetans' lives and gained direct access to their agricultural production. During the Cultural Revolution the Chinese attacked all aspects of Tibetan cultural and national identity and destroyed much of the physical basis for Tibetan culture.

By the end of the Cultural Revolution the Chinese imagined that Tibetan national and cultural identity had been substantially eliminated, that Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule had been overcome, and that Tibetans had transferred their loyalty from Tibet to a China that included Tibet. However, much of what appeared as Tibetan loyalty was due to Chinese repression of any political opposition or deviation. When, in 1979, policies were liberalized, Tibetan religion, culture, and nationalism quickly revived. In addition, Tibet became an international issue due to its opening up to the outside world. By the end of the 1980s the Chinese had once again reneged on their promise to allow Tibetan autonomy because the small degree of cultural autonomy that had been allowed was thought to have permitted the revival of Tibetan nationalism. Economic development, combined with colonization, was thereafter pursued as the solution to China's problems in Tibet. At the same time the Chinese attacked the symbols of Tibetan identity including the status and reputation of the Dalai Lama.

China's current policy in Tibet is one of political repression, economic development, and colonization, with assimilation as the ultimate goal. Despite the Chinese Communists' theories and policies on minority nationality autonomy, they were unable to achieve voluntary assimilation of resistant nationalities like Tibetans. The PRC has therefore had to revert to the traditional Chinese methods for frontier expansion, based upon initial promises of autonomy in order to reduce minority resistance, a gradual decrease in autonomy, and an increase of direct Chinese rule and eventual assimilation by means of colonization.

China's current policy in Tibet illustrates the failure of the Chinese Communists to transform Tibetan national and cultural identity and to cultivate Tibetan loyalty to China. Tibetan cultural and national identity has proven much more persistent than the Chinese Communists imagined. Despite all of the Chinese Communists' policies and programs aimed at the transformation of Tibetan identity, Tibetans have proven resistant.

Despite tremendous Chinese destruction of Tibetan cultural monuments and institutions, Tibetan culture still survives. Despite unceasing Chinese attempts to transform Tibetan national identity into Chinese identity and despite relentless repression of Tibetan nationalism, Tibetan national identity and Tibetan nationalism still survive. In fact, as was predicted by Marxist theory, some aspects of Tibetan national identity and Tibetan nationalism have actually increased under the conditions of Chinese colonialism in Tibet. China's repressive policies in Tibet, combined with almost irresistible incentives for cooperation, have produced an outward conformity among Tibetans but not loyalty to China and identification as Chinese.

Besides failing to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people, China has mostly lost the international propaganda battle in regard to Tibet. In contrast to a success of its policy in achieving political stability in Tibet, if only by repression, China has been unsuccessful in achieving an ideological victory except among the Chinese people themselves. To justify Chinese rule over a non-Chinese people, China repeatedly resorts to Marxist class theory that was supposed to resolve the nationalities issue but has failed to do so. The class theory of nationalism proposes that the real issue is class, not nationality. This theory conveniently ignores the issue of the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet or the national distinctions between Chinese and Tibetans. Following Marx, the theory supposes that class identification is more fundamental, more important, and more lasting than national identity. Unfortunately for Marx and for the Chinese Communists, history has not confirmed their theory.

The Chinese Communists' lingering assertions that Marxism predicts the inevitable course of history appear increasingly forlorn. Marxist class theory has failed to convince Tibetans to accept their inevitable assimilation, and it has failed to convince international critics of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet. Despite the Chinese Communists' attempts to convince Tibetans and the world that the issue of Tibet is about class, the more fundamental issues have remained the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet, China's abuse of Tibetans' human rights in order to enforce its rule, and China's denial of Tibet's right to national self-determination. China cannot address any of these issues. China cannot admit that there is any issue of the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. China cannot admit to any abuses of Tibetans' human rights that are the inevitable result of its forcible imposition of its rule over Tibetans. China cannot admit to the fact of its denial of Tibetan self-determination. China cannot even allow any meaningful Tibetan cultural or religious autonomy, since both are sources of Tibetan nationalism and separatism.

China is therefore caught in a trap of its own making. China has achieved its longstanding ambition to impose Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and has successfully maintained and solidified its control even against Tibetan opposition. However, Chinese hopes that Tibetans would voluntarily abandon their own culture and their own national identity in favor of Chinese socialist culture and Chinese identity have failed to materialize. China has therefore been compelled to forcibly impose its will upon Tibet against enduring opposition. Given Tibetans' reluctance to voluntarily abandon their own culture, China has had to adopt policies of cultural destruction and forcible cultural

assimilation. China has had to resort to colonization as the only way to ensure that Tibet remains a part of China.

Tibet's ultimate assimilation into China, politically and culturally, was always the Chinese plan. However, it was hoped that this could be done without too much resistance if Tibetans could be convinced of the advantages of union with China. However, the Chinese have failed to convince Tibetans to abandon their own culture and national identity. China has then had no choice but to force them to do so or else risk losing Tibet.

China's current policy in Tibet is successful on all fronts but one. Repression has successfully suppressed open Tibetan opposition, except in instances like the demonstrations and riots of 1987-89, the uprising of 2008, or the series of self-immolations that began in 2009. Some Tibetans have benefited from positions in the Chinese administration of Tibet or from economic development and have therefore ceased opposition. Chinese policies have effectively restricted the revival of Tibetan Buddhism and the political activities of monks and nuns. Economic development, along with ever increasing numbers of Chinese in Tibet, seems to hold the key to the Tibetan political problem.

Only Chinese ideology in regard to Tibet has demonstrably failed. China is losing the propaganda battle about Tibet because the illegitimacy of its rule over Tibet and its abuses of Tibetans' rights cannot be disguised by Marxist theory. The only solution to this problem is more propaganda of the same type, since this is China's only weapon in the ideological struggle. Chinese propaganda occasionally finds some international support and is still believed by most Chinese. The Tibet issue has now become primarily an ideological struggle, one that will continue as long as China rules over Tibet.

Since the opening of Tibet in the 1980s, Tibetans have been winning this ideological struggle. The Tibetan version of Tibetan reality is now as generally accepted internationally as was the Chinese version before 1980. Until China opened Tibet to the outside world in the 1980s the Chinese version of Tibetan reality substantially prevailed because of China's virtual monopoly on access to information about Tibet. China painted a picture of Tibet of joyously liberated serfs selflessly assisted by China in throwing off the shackles of feudalism and developing a new and modern Tibet. China was assisted in perpetuating this version by a general sympathy for the ideals of the Chinese Communists and an acceptance of their claims that they were putting these ideals into practice. The contrary claims of the few Tibetan refugees who escaped in the 1960s and 1970s were mostly discounted due to the belief that refugees necessarily reflected the opinions only of those so disgruntled that they chose to flee the country. All of this shifted, however, once the reality of Tibet was exposed to the world.

China's leaders were so confident that Tibetan nationalism was dead that they thought they could actually implement the autonomy often promised but never actually allowed. They thought that the only remaining issue in regard to Tibet was the question of the personal status of the Dalai Lama. They thought that the Dalai Lama and other refugees could be enticed to return and that this would finally resolve the Tibet issue.

Chinese leaders believed their own propaganda that Tibetans rejected the Dalai Lama and that they were loyal to China and the CCP. The revival of Tibetan religion, culture, and nationalism under the conditions of autonomy in Tibet came as an unpleasant surprise. The internationalization of the Tibet issue and the shift in the international perception of the Tibet issue was a further surprise. Chinese leaders still seem genuinely perturbed that their version of Tibetan reality no longer prevails, since they seem to fervently believe in that version themselves. Chinese leaders perpetually attempt to shift this perception back to their favor by the only means they know, by more propaganda.

China's class-based propaganda no longer has the cachet it once had. Nevertheless, it occasionally finds support among those with a leftist or socialist inclination. The perception of reality within Tibet is easily manipulated since Tibetan spokesmen are readily willing to propagate China's version of reality and the instruments of repression are not readily obvious. Outside observers often comment upon the appearance of calm and normality in places such as Lhasa and the absence of such instruments of repression and control as military forces and checkpoints. Such observers are unaware that the Chinese system of control is more intimate, being located not primarily on the streets but in the neighborhood, work unit, or even within the family. Outside observers are often persuaded that the issue of Tibet is economic development, not the survival of an archaic culture. The potential therefore remains for Chinese propaganda about Tibet to achieve some international acceptance.

China will never abandon its attempt to justify its occupation of Tibet. Tibetans will therefore have to conduct a perpetual effort to expose the illegitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet. International perceptions about Tibet are now predominantly in Tibetans' favor. However, China has adopted coercive behavior to achieve international adherence to its policies in regard to Tibet, particularly acknowledgments of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and limitations on the diplomatic activities of the Dalai Lama. China's hysterical demands that no international leaders meet with the Dalai Lama lest they incur Chinese wrath has substantially achieved that purpose, but it has also revealed how intensely sensitive the Tibet issue remains for China.

Chinese sensitivity is due to the fundamental injustice of their rule over Tibet and their policies of repression and cultural destruction. China cannot take any steps to correct that injustice without allowing for Tibetan autonomy and the survival of Tibetan identity, an identity that has been determined to be contrary to China's territorial integrity and national security. China will thus continue to employ propaganda and coercive diplomacy to deny any injustice in regard to Tibet and to pursue total assimilation. The truth about Tibet can be maintained only by constant efforts in opposition to a tireless, well-funded, and massive Chinese propaganda machine dedicated to distortions of that truth.

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this article, as well as a separate book of the same title (China's Tibet: Autonomy or Assimilation, Rowman and Littlefield, 2008) is meant to expose the possessiveness of China's claim to Tibet, not to affirm the legitimacy of that claim.