

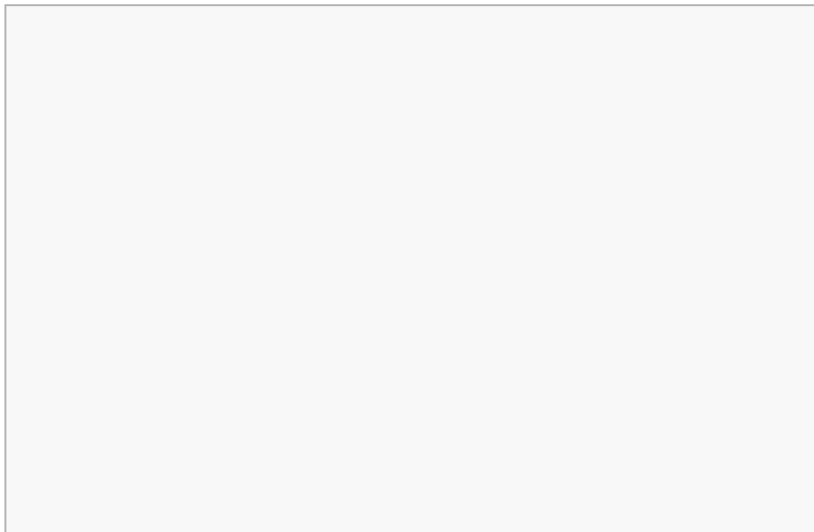
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## **China's Policy on Tibetan Autonomy**

*Warren Smith*



East-West Center  
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# China's Policy on Tibetan Autonomy

Autonomy refers to a system in which a sub-state entity has control over its own cultural, economic, and even domestic political affairs in recognition of some ethnic, national or historical distinctions. The dictionary definition of autonomy usually cites as synonyms: "self-rule," "self-governance" or even "independence." Minimum requirements for an autonomous status are generally considered to be a locally elected legislative body with some independent authority over local concerns, whose exercise of power is generally not subject to veto by the central government; a locally elected chief executive; an independent judicial authority with full responsibility for interpreting local laws; and, joint authority over matters such as foreign trade regulations, police, and exploitation of natural resources. Also, where a society had a previously existing government structure, those structures should be immune to unilateral change by the central government.<sup>1</sup>

Full autonomy, in which only foreign affairs, defense and legal sovereignty reside with the central state, is theoretically synonymous with "internal independence."

The lack of complete sovereignty is the shortcoming of any form of autonomy; its definition, enforcement and administration resides not with the people who theoretically enjoy autonomy but with those who exercise the right of sovereignty. One of the purposes of this paper will be to argue that autonomy is primarily a political system of the past, not the future; autonomy is an archaic rather than a futuristic political status. Autonomy of the archaic type was typical of a pre-modern, "feudal" system of international relations, in which one state or ruler delegated limited sovereignty and provided military protection to a dependent state that enjoyed self-governance but which pledged a nominal allegiance to the dominant state.<sup>2</sup> This system is archaic in that it is typical of a pre-industrial

revolution state or empire that is able to conquer or dominate more territory than it can actually administer. Only with the advent of the industrial revolution were such dominant states able, or had they any need, to exercise direct administration over dependent states.

The industrial revolution created the need to exploit the natural resources present in frontier territories, as the Chinese are doing in Tibet. Improved transportation facilitated direct administration of frontier territories, while the same factors created the need for more direct administration. With improved transportation and communication, frontier dependent states often became more vulnerable to foreign rivals. The British penetration of Tibet is an excellent example. China almost lost Tibet to British influence and perhaps would have if the British had been willing and able to expand their colonial administration of India to include Tibet. Tibet might then have achieved independence with the withdrawal of the British from India. China did lose its claim to Outer Mongolia to the Russians, at the same time that the British were intriguing in Tibet, and Outer Mongolia eventually emerged as an independent state.

After the British penetration of Tibet in 1904, and the 1905 Chinese invasion of eastern Tibet in response, Tibet's traditional *Cho-Yon*, or "Priest-Patron," relationship with China could no longer exist. Tibet had either to achieve independence by means of British patronage or fall victim to Chinese ambitions to impose full Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The Chinese were ultimately successful, partially, at least, due to the fact that the British were unwilling to recognize or support Tibetan independence. Instead, the British made an unsuccessful attempt to perpetuate an archaic and vaguely defined status of Tibetan autonomy under an equally indefinable Chinese "suzerainty." Autonomy, in the Tibetan case as in many others, proved to be incompatible with the prerogatives of the modern centralized state.

Autonomy, as a permanent condition or status, is also contrary to China's history and

political culture. Chinese cultural ideology tended to justify the expansion of China's borders and the assimilation of non-Chinese frontier peoples as a natural expansion of culture. Traditional Chinese frontier policy aimed to achieve frontier security through the advance of Chinese civilization. Autonomy under the dependent state system was the typical first step, followed by increasing Chinese control, colonization and assimilation. The process might begin with conquest of a frontier state or alliance of a frontier state against other barbarians. Seals of office and titles would be awarded to local rulers who would then become dependent upon Chinese recognition of their authority over their own people. Local elites would be acculturated by the education of elite youth. Chinese seals of office and titles, regarded by locals as useful in maintaining their own power, were interpreted by the Chinese as evidence of Chinese sovereignty. This interpretation was enforced by increasing Chinese control over appointment of local officials and, eventually, appointment of Chinese officials as the number of Chinese colonists in the territory increased.<sup>3</sup> China's twentieth century incorporation of Tibet has followed this historical pattern.

Assimilationist ideology was only one of many ways in which Chinese cultural tradition was compatible with Marxism-Leninism. Marxist-Leninist nationality theory and policy also aimed at an ultimate goal of a merging of nationalities into proletarian internationalism. The Chinese Communists promised self-determination to nationalities, but only during that period when the CCP was under Comintern control and influence. With the rise of Mao to the leadership of the CCP in the mid-1930s, self-determination disappeared from the Chinese Communist program in all but theory.

The Chinese Communists acknowledged that Tibet was a different culture and Tibetans a different nationality than the Han Chinese. However, they regarded Tibet as a part of Chinese territory and they tended to think that

Tibetans were estranged from China only because of mistreatment by previous Chinese administrations or the intrigues of foreign imperialism. The Chinese Communists anticipated some resistance in Tibet but they thought that the obvious advantages of inclusion in the advanced Chinese socialist state would overcome Tibetans' desires for separation.

The 1951 17-Point Agreement, by which Tibet became unambiguously a part of China, allowed for extensive autonomy, including the preservation of the Tibetan Government with the Dalai Lama at its head, and of virtually all other Tibetan institutions including the monastic system. However, this document was entirely contradictory in that it provided for the establishment of a Chinese military administration of Tibet and for "various reforms," to be undertaken by the Tibetan people themselves, ultimately leading to the implementation of national regional autonomy in Tibet. The ultimate goal of the Chinese Communists was the implementation of national regional autonomy in Tibet, which did not include the preservation of Tibetan political, religious and social institutions as guaranteed by the 17-Point Agreement. The autonomy promised to Tibet in the 17-Point Agreement was therefore never intended to be anything more than a transitional and temporary arrangement that would exist only until national regional autonomy could be implemented.

Chinese policies in Tibet were almost immediately influenced by a split among Chinese leaders between those who believed that Tibet could be integrated without revolt and those who believed that resistance leading to revolt was inevitable. Mao led the first group and he determined that policies in Tibet should be gradualist in order to prevent revolt.<sup>4</sup> Mao's gradualist policy ultimately failed to prevent the revolt predicted by the hardliners, partially because their analysis of Tibetan resistance was correct, but also because a gradualist policy was not pursued in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. There was

no faction in Chinese politics that preferred that Tibet remain unreformed and unchanged; in other words, there was no faction that thought that China should actually respect Tibetan cultural and political autonomy as was promised in the 17-Point Agreement. There was also no debate about whether Tibet should be transformed in the image of Communist China, only about the rate of transformation.

The history of Tibet under Chinese rule has confirmed the hardliners' predictions. Gradualist policies in Tibet have not only failed to defuse resistance; they have also, in the hardliners' estimation, actually allowed resistance to survive and to resurface. In 1957, the Chinese declared a retrenchment policy in Tibet, during the Hundred Flowers period, in order to forestall the growing resistance in eastern Tibet and as a ploy to convince the Dalai Lama to return from a visit to India. This retrenchment policy, which delayed reforms in the TAR and during which some Chinese personnel were recalled, is now regarded by many Chinese as having allowed the growth of resistance that led to the 1959 revolt. This is despite the fact that the revolt actually began in areas outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), where the retrenchment policy was not applied. Similarly, the liberalization policy of the 1980s, during which, again, the number of Chinese cadres was reduced and Tibetans were allowed some cultural and religious autonomy, is blamed for the riots and demonstrations in Tibet from 1987 to 1989. Indeed, the liberalization policies of the 1980s did permit the revival of Tibetan religion, culture and nationalism and they have apparently convinced many Chinese that any Tibetan autonomy, however limited, is dangerous and cannot be allowed.

Present Tibetan Government in Exile proposals for increased Tibetan autonomy in a greater Tibetan autonomous region thus confront a Chinese experience that Tibetan autonomy is dangerously uncontrollable. The current policy of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile is to accept

“genuine” Tibetan autonomy within China. The Dalai Lama has described genuine autonomy as equivalent to internal self-rule of all Tibetan cultural areas within the PRC. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile have promoted autonomy as both compatible with Tibet’s traditional pre-twentieth century relations with China and as a solution to a national self-determination issue such as Tibet in an era when national identity and national borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant. The Dalai Lama has said that Tibet might benefit, primarily economically, by being a part of China. Autonomy is thus promoted as being both archaic, and thus compatible with Tibet’s history, and futuristic, and therefore compatible with modern developments in ethnic and national relations. Critics say that the archaic aspect of this theory seems suspiciously like an attempt to revive the old *Cho-Yon*, or “patron-priest” relationship with China and to justify the Tibetan system of *Chosi Sungdrel*, or unity of religion and politics, a system that is often accused of having been responsible for the compromise and then loss of Tibet’s independence.<sup>5</sup>

Tibetan hopes for “genuine autonomy” confront not only Chinese reluctance to grant any autonomy at all but also the question of whether autonomy of any type can satisfy Tibetans’ desires for self-rule, self-determination or cultural preservation. Autonomy is by definition not the same as self-determination, given that ultimate decision-making power remains in the hands of the Chinese. Cultural survival is also questionable since all aspects of Tibetan culture have been identified by the Chinese as inseparable from Tibetan nationalism. Chinese leaders may justifiably think that they cannot tolerate a separate national identity within the Chinese “unitary multinational state. The possibility that China might allow Tibetan autonomy sufficient to preserve Tibetan culture, and thus Tibetan national identity, seems unlikely.

### **Pre-20th Century Tibetan Autonomy<sup>6</sup>**

Chinese imperial ideology acknowledged the cultures on China’s Inner Asian frontier, the steppe nomads and the Tibetans, as different from the Chinese but not as cultures comparable to Chinese culture. Tang dynasty China had to deal with the Tibetan Empire of the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries as an actual equal, at least militarily. Twentieth century Chinese regimes, including the Chinese Communists, have interpreted the history of the Tang-Tibetan relationship, particularly two marriage alliances between Tibetan kings and Chinese princesses, as evidence that Tibet began the process of becoming a part of China at that time. The Chinese Communists maintained that Tibet had begun the inevitable process of “merging of nationalities” during the Tang dynasty.

In 1248 Tibet was incorporated into the Mongol Empire, which at that time did not include China. The Mongol Khan Godan demanded Tibet’s submission from the most prominent lama of the time, Sakya Pandita, in return for refraining from a military conquest of Tibet. Sakya Pandita submitted to the Mongols on behalf of all Tibetans. He was rewarded with Mongol patronage for his Sakyapa sect. The Sakyapas became the agents of Mongol authority in Tibet, beginning the tradition of monastic rule in Tibet as well as the dependency of monastic rule upon foreign patrons.

Godan Khan summoned a lama to submit on behalf of Tibet not only because lamas were the most prominent personalities in Tibet, and because the Mongols respected the lamas’ spiritual powers, but also because of a Mongol policy of favoring religious authorities as their agents in all the countries they conquered. The Mongols favored religious over secular authorities in order to avoid secular nationalist resistance. This policy recognized that religion was often more universalist than nationalist and that religious authorities were often more interested in the spread of their doctrine than in the political status of their nation.<sup>7</sup> Tibetan lamas were



interested in the propagation of their doctrine not only for religious reasons but also because of their need for foreign patrons to help them in the establishment of religious political authority in Tibet and to defeat their rivals, both secular and religious.<sup>8</sup> Sakya Pandita justified his submission to the Mongols based upon his belief that Mongol patronage of Buddhism would allow Tibet a special status within the Mongol Empire and facilitate the spread of the Buddhist doctrine throughout the Mongols' domains.

Although Sakya Pandita acknowledged that the arrangement he made with the Mongols involved the outright submission of Tibet, and he called upon other Tibetan lamas and leaders to come to the Mongol camp to submit, later Tibetan apologists have maintained that the system initiated by Sakya Pandita and evolved by his nephew, Phagspa, did not imply the loss of Tibetan sovereignty. This relationship, known as *Cho-Yon* or "Priest-Patron," was rationalized as entirely spiritual and personal, between Tibetan lamas and Mongol Khans, and between Dalai Lamas and Manchu emperors of China, in which Tibetan lamas provided spiritual services in exchange for political patronage mainly involving lavish gifts to Tibetan monasteries. Phagspa's idealized *Cho-Yon* was dependent upon personal relationships and lasted only as long as did the extraordinary relationship between Phagspa and Khubilai Khan.<sup>9</sup>

Phagspa's theory of his personal relationship with Khubilai, and of Tibetan Buddhism with the Mongol Empire, was extremely sophisticated in its understanding of the cultural and political needs of the Mongols, but extremely naïve in anticipating political implications for Tibet. The fatal flaw in the *Cho-Yon* system was Tibet's dependency upon foreign political and military patrons. The Tibetan Buddhist church established itself as the ruling authority in Tibet by means of foreign patronage, but it fatally compromised Tibet's sovereignty in the process.

Mongol Khans and Manchu emperors were Buddhists and they often accorded

Tibetan lamas high respect and Tibet a special status. Neither the Mongol nor the Manchu rulers of China attempted to directly administer Tibet or incorporate it into their administration. Tibet thus enjoyed a great degree of autonomy throughout the Mongol period, independence during the subsequent Ming, and substantial autonomy during the Qing. Unfortunately for Tibet and its special relationship with the Mongol and Manchu empires, both became Chinese dynasties, Yuan (1260-1368) and Qing (1640-1912) respectively, and their Chinese successors had less respect for Tibet's special status. Chinese successors to the foreign conquest dynasties claimed all their imperial territories as integral parts of China.

#### **British Patronage for Tibetan Autonomy, 1904-1947**

The end of the last foreign conquest dynasty of China, in 1912, coincided with the end of the feudal era of empires and dependent state relationships and the advent of the modern centralized state system in which vague relationships between states and dependent territories were no longer tenable. The British invasion of Tibet in 1904 served notice upon the Chinese that their claim to possession of Tibet was no longer safe from challenge by foreign rivals. The Chinese were compelled to either establish direct Chinese control and administration over Tibet or risk losing Tibet to British influence or to an independent status.

The British invasion of Tibet in 1904 came at the end of an era for the British Empire as well as for China and Tibet. The British invaded Tibet in order to protect their colonial domain in India from what they thought were attempts by their Great Game rival, Russia, to establish its influence in Tibet. The British were intent upon protecting British India from imperial rivals but they were unwilling and unable to extend their empire to actually include Tibet. Britain attempted to keep the Russians out by recognizing a vague Chinese protectorate over Tibet. The British attempted

to preserve for themselves a role in Tibet, particularly a commercial role, by means of their recognition of Tibetan autonomy under Chinese "suzerainty."

The British definition of suzerainty was "nominal sovereignty over a semi-independent or internally autonomous state."<sup>10</sup> However, the British were unable to give any substance to Tibetan autonomy, and they were unable to convince the Chinese to respect Tibetan autonomy or to confine their ambitions in Tibet to the British concept of suzerainty. The Chinese regarded British attempts to limit Chinese control over Tibet as an attempt to separate Tibet from China and thus reacted accordingly.

Rather than pursue a traditional colonialist approach in Tibet, the British attempted to preserve an archaic model of Tibet's traditional relationship with China at a time when that relationship had been changed forever by the very fact of the British entry onto the scene. The inability of the British to pursue a traditional type of colonialism in Tibet also affected Tibet's future status. Tibet might have emerged as an independent country if it had been definitely detached from China under a British colonial administration. Outer Mongolia did so after a period of Russian and then Soviet domination.

To support their policy in Tibet the British had to define the terms of Tibetan autonomy and Chinese suzerainty. They attempted to do so at a tripartite conference at the British Indian summer capital at Simla in 1914. The British hoped to establish an autonomous, but not independent, Tibetan state, one that would recognize Chinese suzerainty and would not require direct British administration of Tibet, but that would serve as a buffer state between British India, and Russia and China. The Chinese were reluctant to accept Tibet as a partner in negotiations but they knew that the British would recognize a far greater degree of Chinese authority over Tibet than would the Tibetans themselves. The results of the conference revealed that China considered

these negotiations only as a temporary measure to forestall Tibetan independence until China's power was restored and China could reassume what it thought was its rightful authority over Tibet.

During the negotiations at the Simla Conference the Chinese claimed that Tibet had been a part of China since the Mongol conquest of both China and Tibet. The Chinese demanded recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet but promised that Tibet would not be converted into a Chinese province. The Tibetans arrived at the conference with tax records showing Tibetan administration over almost all the territory they regarded as Tibet. They sought to have all Tibetan cultural areas included within the Tibetan state. They denied that the previous relationship between Tibetan Dalai Lamas and Chinese emperors implied Tibetan subordination to China.

The British proposed the division of Tibet into inner and outer zones (in relation to China), much as Mongolia had been divided. Outer Tibet would be autonomous while Inner Tibet would come under some unspecified form of Chinese administration. The agreement would recognize Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The subsequent Simla Convention was agreed to by the Tibetan, British and Chinese representatives. However, the Chinese government later refused to ratify the Convention, ostensibly only because of disagreements about the status of Inner Tibet and the alignment of the border between Inner and Outer Tibet. The Tibetans had agreed to Chinese suzerainty over Tibet but only on the condition that Tibetan autonomy was officially recognized and respected by China. Because China did not ratify the Convention, Tibet did not consider itself bound by its acknowledgement of Chinese suzerainty. By its refusal to ratify the Convention, China gained no British recognition of its suzerainty over Tibet. However, China avoided acknowledging Tibet's right to enter into an international treaty or any limitation on China's authority over Tibet. China reserved

the right to settle with Tibet unilaterally at a time of its own choosing.<sup>11</sup>

In 1921, the British presented the Chinese with an ultimatum, that if they refused to renegotiate the Simla Convention then the British would treat Tibet as an autonomous state under Chinese suzerainty. However, with the lack of any Chinese response, the British found themselves having recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet without any corresponding Chinese admission of Tibet's right to autonomy. The British compounded this error by continually, during the following years, acknowledging Chinese suzerainty while never securing any Chinese recognition of Tibetan autonomy.<sup>12</sup>

British difficulty in defining and achieving Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty was due to factors beyond China's rejection of British interference in what it considered its internal affairs. The British were trying to define and perpetuate a political status of an era that had already passed. Tibet's traditional autonomy had existed only because the pre-twentieth century Chinese dynasties had perceived no threat from foreign rivals or from Tibetan nationalism over their claims to sovereignty over Tibet. British interference in Tibet, especially British support for Tibetan autonomy, changed the situation entirely from the Chinese perspective. Chinese nationalism of the twentieth century arose in response to the Chinese perception of foreign interference. Once Chinese nationalism was a factor there was little chance that China would willingly accept anything less than full sovereignty over Tibet.

Simultaneous with Indian independence in 1947 the British gave up their interest and involvement in Tibetan affairs. By this time some of the British officials involved with Tibet had realized the futility of their policy there. Hugh Richardson, the last British representative in Lhasa, admitted that suzerainty "has never been defined and, indeed, appears to be incapable of absolute definition."<sup>13</sup> Until this time, most countries

aware of Tibet, the United States included, had followed the British policy of recognizing Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty. The Americans, less aware than the British of the realities of Tibet, attempted to further perpetuate this status because of US opposition to Chinese Communism. Thus was Tibet's role in the Great Game transformed into a similar role in the Cold War.

### **Pre-1950 KMT and CCP Policy on Autonomy**

After the nationalist revolution of 1911 the Republican government attempted to retain all the territory of the Qing Empire by redefining the non-Chinese peoples of the frontier as part of the "five races" of peoples that shared Chinese heritage. The "five races," as defined by Sun Yat-sen, were the Han, Tibetans, Mongols, Manchu and "Tatars" or Turks (Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, etc.). Sun determined that China was composed of one race, the Chinese, but that the Chinese were composed of "five races," actually nationalities or ethnic groups (*minzu*), all of whom shared Chinese origins. The Chinese nationalists, like the Communists, were influenced by self-determination doctrines of both Wilsonian and Leninist forms; however, they interpreted self-determination only in the context of China's right to freedom from foreign interference, not as a right of any of China's nationalities to independence. Self-determination in regard to nationalities was interpreted only as a right to equality within China. Sun specified that China, including Qing imperial possessions, was an indivisible unitary state: "In Chinese history, unification of the country has been regarded as the normal phenomenon, and the separation of the country as an abnormal phenomenon."<sup>14</sup>

Sun Yat-sen's nationality policy was continued under the Kuomintang regime by Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang simplified the nationality issue and idealized China's benevolence toward other nations in the past, claiming that China had never acted in an imperialist manner toward any peoples on its frontier; instead, these peoples had been

attracted to join China by China's benevolence and superior civilization.<sup>15</sup> Chiang proclaimed that all of China's peoples had a common ancestry.<sup>16</sup> He believed that Tibet had begun a natural process of assimilation to China in the seventh century.<sup>17</sup> Chiang, like Sun before him, interpreted self-determination as equal access of all nationalities in China to the benefits of Chinese civilization.<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese Communists considered themselves the heirs to Sun Yat-sen's nationalist doctrines. They derived their nationalities policy from Leninist doctrine and Stalinist practice. Lenin defined self-determination as the exclusive right of the proletariat of any nation. Since proletarian consciousness by definition was non-nationalist, the proletariat of any nation would naturally choose union with another state in which national oppression was non-existent, such as any socialist state. In a socialist state, the question of nationalism would hardly arise since exploitation would not exist. With the elimination of class exploitation, the need of nationalities for self-determination would be automatically satisfied. National oppression, and nationalism itself, was a creation of bourgeois rule, and thus a phenomenon exclusively of capitalism. Socialism, or rule of the proletariat, would create proletarian internationalism free of nationalism and nationalist oppression. In order to prevent any nationality exercising its theoretical right to self-determination, any such tendencies were defined as bourgeois and therefore illegitimate. In the absence of a proletariat in any nationality, the decision about union with the larger state was to be made by the proletariat of the larger state, represented by the Communist Party.<sup>19</sup>

Marxist-Leninist nationalities doctrine was in practice a cynical exploitation of a promised right to self-determination in order to achieve assimilation of minority nationalities within a unified socialist state. By means of Marxist dialectics, communists were able to support the theory of national self-determination, while opposing its practice,

except against capitalist states. The whole process was theoretically voluntary since the decision was made by the proletariat in question, or its representatives, who always acted in the best interests of any nationality by choosing union with a socialist state. National autonomy within a socialist state was also promised, even though socialism was the ultimate goal. The promise of autonomy was also subject to the Marxist dialectic. National minorities were to be subjected to a process of socialist education wrapped in familiar cultural forms according to the communist doctrine "nationalist in form, socialist in content."<sup>20</sup>

In its 1931 Constitution, the Chinese Communist Party supported the right to self-determination of the national minorities of China, including Tibetans. However, this resolution was adopted at a time when the CCP was dominated by Comintern agents and by Chinese who had been educated in the Soviet Union. Their influence is made evident by the extraordinary statement that any Chinese minority might choose not only to independence but also union with the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> Mao later criticized the 1931 Constitution for its theoretical position on the minority question for failing to consider the "concrete conditions" of China. After Mao's rise to power in 1935 the right to secession or federation was no longer emphasized, although self-determination remained official CCP policy. Mao later reverted to the traditional Chinese assimilationist policy that the only thing that minority nationalities wanted was equal treatment within a Chinese state. Nevertheless, in 1945 Mao claimed that the KMT had abandoned Sun's self-determination policy, which he interpreted as a free union of nationalities, while the KMT had abandoned it.<sup>22</sup>

In 1945, at the conclusion of the Second World War, Chiang Kai-shek, in the anti-colonialist spirit of the time, promised Tibet and other nationalities self-determination ranging from "a very high degree of autonomy" to independence.<sup>23</sup> Chiang's

statement undoubtedly reflected the Western Allies influence on China during the World War and immediately after. Since China had been forced by the Soviet Union to recognize the independence of Mongolia after the war, Chiang may have been trying to prevent Tibet's case being brought up by Britain or the United States. In 1960, Chiang again made a statement in support of Tibet's right to self-determination, primarily to express KMT support for the Tibetan revolt against the Communists.<sup>24</sup> Both KMT and CCP policies on self-determination for nationalities were primarily directed against the other. Each interpreted self-determination as equal treatment within a Chinese state, or autonomy, which each maintained it would allow while the other would not.

#### **The PRC's System of National Regional Autonomy**

The CCP decided upon its victory over the KMT that the liberation of Tibetans and all other "minority nationalities" had been achieved along with that of the Han Chinese. As Chinese Communist theorists explained it, national oppression could exist only under capitalism and colonialism. Since pre-revolutionary China had been in the pre-capitalist stage of development it could not, according to Marxist doctrine, have been in a colonialist relationship with any of its minority nationalities. With the liberation of all China's nationalities from foreign imperialism and the achievement of a socialist system in China (skipping the capitalist system and the capitalist period of development) national oppression had been abolished and the "self-determination" of all nationalities automatically achieved.

CCP doctrine on minority nationalities claimed to "combine the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete conditions of China." The Chinese Communists, like the Nationalists, assumed that equality within the Chinese state was the equivalent of self-determination for minority nationalities. Both Leninist dialectical self-

determination and traditional Chinese assimilationism are evident in the assumption that that these nations would voluntarily choose to unite with China because they would realize that their cultural and economic interest lay in union with the more advanced state. The fate of China's minority nationalities was said to be historically determined-to be assimilated within the Chinese multinational state. Should there be any question that this union was voluntary, the Han Chinese were defined as but one of China's nationalities, all of whom had collectively decided upon union.<sup>25</sup>

The PRC adopted a system of "national regional autonomy" instead of a federal system as in the Soviet Union. The CCP claimed that none of China's national minorities were in exclusive possession of contiguous territories free of other minorities or Han Chinese. Even Tibetans, seemingly an exception to the latter characterization, were deemed to live in a compact community only in the area later designated the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), while many more Tibetans, like other nationalities in China, were "dispersed in different areas of the country," in particular, in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan.<sup>26</sup> This rationalization denied the reality that all Tibetan cultural areas were contiguous, and that more than half the population of Tibetans were minorities within Chinese provinces adjacent to the TAR only because of historical territorial divisions made by the Chinese themselves.

The PRC's system of national regional autonomy was formulated in 1949 in the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which had the status of a provisional constitution. The CPPCC was the organization that embodied the United Front policy of political consultation by the CCP with "democratic" political parties and with the national minorities. Minority nationality policy came under the United Front strategy, and was administered by the United Front

Work Department. The United Front policy was described as working "from above and from below," with both upper class collaborators and lower class sympathizers. The Common Program's provisions in regard to nationalities were as follows:

Article 9. All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China shall have equal rights and duties.

Article 50. All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and cooperative family composed of all its nationalities. Nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression, and disrupting the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.

Article 51. Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and various kinds of autonomous organizations for the different nationalities shall be set up according to the size of the respective peoples and regions. In places where different nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of the national minorities, the different nationalities shall each have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of state power.

Article 52. All national minorities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China shall have the right to join the People's Liberation Army and to organize local people's public security forces in accordance with the unified military system of the state.

Article 53. All national minorities shall have the freedom to develop their spoken and written languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs. The people's government shall assist the masses of all national minorities in their political, economic, cultural, and educational development.<sup>27</sup>

The 1952 "General Program for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy for Minorities" stated: "Each autonomous area is an integral part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. The autonomous organ of each autonomous area is a local government led by the government of the next higher level, under the unified leadership of the central government." The duty of each local autonomous government was to "educate and guide the people living in the area towards unity and mutual assistance between all nationalities of the country, and towards love for the People's Republic of China in which all nationalities live together in a spirit of fraternity and cooperation like one big family."<sup>28</sup>

Similar provisions were repeated in the 1954 Constitution, which stated:

The People's Republic of China is a unified state of many nationalities. All the nationalities are equal. Discrimination against or oppression of any nationality, or any act that undermines the unity of the nationalities, is prohibited. All the nationalities have freedom to use and foster the growth of their spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs or ways. Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas entirely or largely inhabited by minorities. Such autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.<sup>29</sup>

The 1954 Constitution specified that national minority autonomous areas might be established at the *qu*, or regional level, equivalent to a province; *zhou*, or prefecture within a province or another autonomous region; and *xian*, or county within a district with a Han or other minority nationality majority population. The CCP justified its system of national regional autonomy on the basis that it allowed for the exercise of autonomy by scattered nationality populations wherever they were found, rather than only in a single region (as in a federal system) or as individual members of a

minority nationality (as in a system of national autonomy where members of minorities would exercise individual autonomous rights independent of their territorial location within the state). As Zhou Enlai said, national regional autonomy was most appropriate for the situation of China's minorities because it allowed for the exercise of collective autonomy by minorities in their scattered areas of concentration:

This national regional autonomy is a correct combination of national autonomy and regional autonomy, a correct combination of economic and political factors; this not only makes it possible for a nationality living in a compact community to enjoy the right of autonomy, but also enables nationalities which live together [with other nationalities] to enjoy the right of autonomy. Thus, practically all nationalities—those with large populations as well as those with small ones, those who live in big compact communities as well as those which live in small ones—have founded autonomous units commensurate with their size, fully enjoying the right of national autonomy. Such a system is a creation hitherto unknown in history.<sup>30</sup>

The national regional autonomy system had the effect of dividing the frontier nations, such as Tibet and the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, into numerous separate political units, which prevented any from having a unified territory or political representation. This allowed for the exercise of the CCP's principle of democratic centralism, or centralized rule from Beijing, and was thus most appropriate not for these nationalities but for China's security interests. Although organs of government within autonomous regions were theoretically to be determined in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the people of the nationality or nationalities enjoying autonomy in a given area, in fact nationality areas were organized in political units having the same function and the same relation to the central government as local governmental organizations in Han areas.

Tibetan areas of eastern Tibet, or Amdo and eastern Kham, came under the system of national regional autonomy at various dates in the 1950s, as each autonomous district was officially inaugurated. The usual requirement for the "grant" of autonomous status was that the area had undergone "democratic reforms" and sufficient Tibetan cadres had been recruited to create a facade of local leadership. These cadres were usually lower class "liberated serfs" cultivated by the Chinese or upper class collaborators. Most traditional leadership was purged during democratic reforms. Therefore, even with the implementation of national regional autonomy there was little autonomy in practice since the traditional leadership had been eliminated and the new Tibetan leadership was entirely controlled by the Chinese. In addition, most of these areas erupted in revolt as soon as democratic reforms began.

The part of Tibet that was to become the TAR was governed by the traditional Tibetan administrative system, supervised by Chinese cadres and PLA officers, from 1951 to 1956. From 1956 to 1959 it came under the authority of the Preparatory Committee of the TAR, which was a transitional governing body composed of representatives of the Tibetan Government, the Panchen Lama and other Tibetan collaborative bodies, and Chinese officials. All actual authority was centered in the CCP Tibet Work Committee. From the revolt in 1959 to 1965 Tibet was governed directly by the Chinese PLA. Tibet may have enjoyed some actual autonomy during this transitional period, especially before the Tibetan governmental structure was altered in 1956, but this was simply because Chinese control over Tibet was incomplete. The autonomy that Tibet enjoyed at this time was consistent with what Tibet had been promised in the 17-Point Agreement, but it was not what the Chinese meant by national regional autonomy.

The Tibet Autonomous Region was not governed by the system of national regional

autonomy until 1965, when autonomous regional status was officially inaugurated. Preparations for the establishment of the TAR began with elections to people's congresses at the county level. The rules provided for "general suffrage" with the exception of "rebels, counterrevolutionaries and others who have been deprived of political rights according to law." Elections at the local level were organized by committees appointed by the Preparatory Committee. The Preparatory Committee Election Committee consisted of "representatives of the CCP and the people's organizations and other patriots."<sup>31</sup> The format for choosing candidates was described by *Radio Peking*: "Before the elections, candidates were compared by the people during discussions, ensuring that only those noted for their firm stands, their obedience to the party, and their determination to follow the road to socialism would be elected."<sup>32</sup> These candidates were then unanimously approved by the people and thus "elected." Those elected at the county level then chose representatives at the district level.

The process of local "elections" continued until 1965, when all 70 counties of the TAR had finally organized "people's congresses." These then chose a total of 301 delegates (226 Tibetan, 59 Han, and 16 of other nationalities) to the People's Congress of the TAR, which convened on 1 September 1965 to formally establish the TAR. Although the formal establishment of the TAR was accompanied by much fanfare and propaganda in regard to its significance in the achievement of Tibetan self-rule, it had little meaning for Tibetans since all political authority remained firmly in the hands of the CCP Tibet Regional Committee and the PLA Tibet Military Region Command, all of whose members were Han Chinese. In addition, less than a year later the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began, during which not only was there no autonomy for Tibetans but they came under extreme assimilationist pressures and much of their culture and religion was repressed and

religious monuments and artifacts were destroyed.

The Cultural Revolution did not end until 1976, and Tibet did not receive much relief until 1980. The 1982 Constitution granted more autonomous rights, and in 1984 the PRC revised its law on national regional autonomy, giving the people of the national minorities more legal rights. The most important provisions of the 1982 Constitution in regard to national regional autonomy were as follows:

Article 112. The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas are the people's congresses and the people's governments of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties.

Article 114. The chairman of an autonomous region, the prefect of an autonomous prefecture or the head of an autonomous county shall be a citizen of the nationality exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned.

Article 116. The people's congresses of the national autonomous areas have the power to enact regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in the areas concerned. The regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations of autonomous regions shall be submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval before they go into effect.

Article 117. The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas have the power of autonomy in administering the finances of their areas. All revenues accruing to the national autonomous areas under the financial system of the state shall be managed and used by the organs of self-government of those areas on their own.

Article 118. The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas independently arrange for and administer local economic



development under the guidance of the state plans. In exploiting natural resources and building enterprises in the national autonomous areas, the state shall give due consideration of those areas.

Article 119. The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas independently administer educational, scientific, cultural, public health and physical culture affairs in their respective areas, protect and sift through the cultural heritage of the nationalities and work for the vigorous development of their cultures.

Article 120. The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas may, in accordance with the military system of the state and practical local needs and with the approval of the State Council, organize local public security forces for the maintenance of public order.<sup>33</sup>

In 1984, the CCP passed a new "Law on National Regional Autonomy." The law says that "Regional autonomy of nationalities is practiced in areas where minority nationalities are concentrated and where self-governing bodies are established and the right of autonomy is exercised under the uniform direction of the Central Government." According to the new law, autonomous regional governments were given the authority to "formulate regulations with respect to regional autonomy and other regulations in accordance with its own political, economic and cultural characteristics"; to "alter or cease to implement any laws or regulations issued by the Central Government if these laws and regulations do not suit the conditions of an autonomous area"; to "adopt special policies and special measures in accordance with local economic conditions," and "promulgate its own economic policies and plans in light of the local economic conditions"; and to "pursue foreign trade and open foreign trade ports." Autonomous regions were given authority over natural resource usage in their own areas and control over transient populations.

Citizens of minority nationalities were to be allowed freedom of religious belief, but the central government retained the power "to restrict religious activities in the interest of public order, health, and education." Religious groups were prohibited from being "subject to any foreign domination." Nationalities had the right to "use and develop their own spoken and written languages and freedom to preserve their own customs," and each had the right to "set up its own education system and curricula." Elementary education was to be conducted in the nationality language, but "senior students should learn Mandarin."<sup>34</sup>

All autonomous rights were subject to approval of the central government. The head of the "people's government" of autonomous regions was to be of the majority nationality of that region but the head of the CCP in the region, could be of any nationality. In practice, the head of the CCP in nationality regions was almost invariably Han. In the TAR, this has been the case since 1951. The CCP justified this policy, and the fact that no Tibetan had ever been the head of the CCP in the TAR, with the theory that party organization was not nationality specific. Any Party member could rise to high levels without regard to nationality; therefore, "there is no direct link between whoever takes the post of first secretary of the regional Party committee and regional national autonomy."<sup>35</sup>

The 1984 Law on National Regional Autonomy was more detailed than previous autonomy laws, but its provisions were similar. The only significant addition was Deng Xiaoping's "Four Fundamental Principles."<sup>36</sup> With the exception of new provisions on economic autonomy, which were circumscribed by central government control, there was so little new in the 1984 law that the question is raised concerning the CCP's reasons for issuing a "new" law except that the old law had not been respected in the past. Religious freedom was limited to superficial aspects of personal faith; organized Buddhism was still subject to rigorous supervision and controls. The provision that

higher education would still be conducted in Chinese meant that for any Tibetan to attain more than menial employment or to seek higher education Chinese, rather than Tibetan, language skills had to be pursued. Despite the provision that autonomous regions should have control over natural resource usage, Tibetans had little or no control over resource exploitation. In fact, the "bargain" that Mao had offered to Tibet in the 1950s—that Tibet should supply natural resources to China while China would provide Tibet with development assistance—was repeated almost verbatim in the article announcing the new law.<sup>37</sup>

In 2001, the CCP once again revised its national regional autonomy law. Unlike the 1984 law, the main changes in the new law were not in granting more autonomy but in strengthening central administrative control over economic policies, particularly in the implementation of the Great Western Development Plan. That plan was specifically cited as aimed at solving China's frontier nationality problems, meaning Tibet and Xinjiang. The amendments to the autonomy law were said to focus on accelerating economic development and promoting national solidarity. In regard to natural resource exploitation the new law said that the state would give "a certain level of compensation to national autonomous areas from which natural resources are exported." In addition, the state would give "a certain level of compensation for contributions made by national autonomous areas to national ecological equilibrium and environmental protection."<sup>38</sup>

Chinese laws governing national regional autonomy, now referred to as regional ethnic autonomy, have remained substantially unchanged since the 1982 Constitution and the 1984 Law on National Regional Autonomy. Current regulations have a few modern permutations, the most significant of which are as follows:

In accordance with the Constitution and the Law on Self-government in the Ethnic Autonomous Areas, the organs of autonomy may enjoy the following self-governing rights in the building of spiritual civilization: To make local educational plans, according to governmental education guidelines and stipulations of relevant laws, setup of local schools or colleges and universities of various types, and to develop models of running schools or colleges or universities, syllabuses, language teaching, and measures for enrolling students; to develop their own ethnic education, eliminate illiteracy, and train professional people among the ethnic minority groups. To develop plans based on their own ethnic culture areas such as literature and art, news reports, publishing, broadcasting, films, and television with ethnic features and characteristics; to collect, sort out, translate, and publish ethnic books; to protect ethnic cultural relics, rare cultural relics, and other important historical relics of the culture.

In accordance with regulations in the Law on Self-government in the Ethnic Autonomous Areas, the organs of autonomy have the right to introduce, according to relevant laws, measures to manage the floating population. They also have the right to introduce measures for family planning according to relevant laws and the actual local situation.

In accordance with regulations in the Law on Self-government in the Ethnic Autonomous Areas, the ethnic autonomous areas have the right to introduce, according to the Constitution and relevant laws, regulations for the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations concerning the organization and work of the organs of autonomy in the ethnic autonomous areas.<sup>39</sup>

As one analyst has written, the PRC's system of national regional autonomy was significantly unaccompanied by a legal or political system capable of guaranteeing minority nationalities' autonomous rights:

The implementing legislation necessary to give detail and enforceability to this constitutional promise of autonomy was never enacted. In

practice, central and regional Communist party directives determined the degree of autonomy enjoyed by any of the country's ethnic minorities. ...The Chinese legal system plainly fails to provide a sufficiently precise definition of autonomy that can serve as a legal basis for effective autonomy in minority areas. ...the ambiguities of the autonomous administrative system are unmistakably rooted in the larger problems of the country's legislative and administrative structure. ...China's formal legal and administrative system if autonomy for ethnic minorities is not sufficiently developed to provide either a theoretical or practical definition of autonomy.<sup>40</sup>

As will be seen in the following discussion of the actual practice of Tibetan autonomy within the PRC, politics has always dominated over policy. Despite the supposedly autonomous administrative structure in Tibetan autonomous areas, Chinese cadres dominate in every administrative role and the CCP actually rules with little regard to the autonomous administration. The nature of Chinese rule over a non-Chinese people and China's unwillingness to trust its frontier security to a people unreconciled to Chinese rule have determined the limits of Chinese willingness to allow Tibetan autonomy. Even during those brief periods when the PRC has tried to allow a small degree of autonomy, nationalist resistance and political and security considerations have forced a retreat to a more repressive policy.

### **Tibetan Autonomy under Chinese Communist Rule**

The 1951 "17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" promised Tibet many more autonomous rights than were prescribed in the system of national regional autonomy. Since national regional autonomy was also to be applied to Tibet, the 17-Point Agreement was a considerably contradictory document. Article 3 of the 17-Point Agreement said, "The Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under

the unified leadership of the Central People's Government." Article 4 declared: "The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual." The 17-Point Agreement promised to preserve Tibet's culture, religion, social system and government practically unchanged except that Tibet was now part of China. The key to the resolution of this contradiction was contained in Article 11, which said, "In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The Local Government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet."<sup>41</sup>

The first step in the transition from the 17-Point Agreement to national regional autonomy was made by the creation of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR), which was intended to prepare Tibet for the granting of full autonomous status under the national regional autonomy system. In 1954, the Dalai Lama and a large entourage visited Beijing for the meeting of the National People's Congress at which a new PRC Constitution was to be adopted. Discussions were also begun about the creation of the PCTAR. Tibetan participation in the NPC meeting, and the preparation of the 1954 Constitution was considered by the Chinese Government to constitute Tibetan consent that the "no changes in the Tibetan political system" provision of article 4 of the 17-Point Agreement could be superseded by the "reforms" provision of article 11. In addition, the 17-Point Agreement itself would be superseded by changes in the political administration of Tibet made by mutual agreement with the Dalai Lama and the existing Tibetan government. Tibet thus was to lose some of its special status entailed in the

17-Point Agreement and come under the same system of national regional autonomy that was to govern all the national minorities in the PRC.

The PCTAR was not formally established until 1956. Although the majority of the members of the PCTAR were Tibetan, all actual governing power was transferred from the Tibetan Government to the CCP's Tibet Work Committee, composed exclusively of Chinese. The creation of the PCTAR altered the political system in Tibet and was thus contrary to the 17-Point Agreement, which had promised that the Tibetan governmental system would remain unaltered. The key was that the Chinese could maintain that Tibetans themselves had agreed to these changes. The creation of the PCTAR illustrates the transitory nature of the situation within Tibet in the 1950s. The CCP did not intend to tolerate the uneasy coexistence of the CCP and the Dalai Lama's government as a permanent system of Tibetan autonomy. The autonomy promised to Tibet in the 17-Point Agreement was not what the CCP meant by national regional autonomy; therefore, it is not correct to say that "autonomy" in Tibet in the 1950s failed nor is it reasonable to imagine that a similar coexistence might someday be re-established.

In 1957, the Chinese announced a "retrenchment" policy for the TAR. Democratic reforms would not be implemented during the next five-year plan (1957-1961) and for the subsequent plan as well if the Tibetans themselves were not ready. Mao later said that reforms could be delayed as long as necessary; even for 50 years; however, reforms must ultimately be implemented. Since reforms were to be delayed, some Chinese personnel could be withdrawn from the TAR. Mao announced this policy in his "On Contradictions" speech, which inaugurated the brief "Hundred Flowers" liberalization period of early 1957.<sup>42</sup>

The 1957 retrenchment policy in Tibet was also undertaken for more specific reasons. At the end of 1956, the Dalai Lama was in

India, having been invited there for the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Buddha. While in India he had indicated his intention to seek asylum because of his frustration with Chinese policies in Tibet. Zhou Enlai traveled to New Delhi to try to convince the Dalai Lama to return. Primary among Zhou's enticements was the retrenchment policy. Given Zhou's and Nehru's assurances that China intended to respect Tibetan autonomy, the Dalai Lama was persuaded to return.

An equally important factor in the retrenchment policy was the revolt in eastern Tibet, which had begun as soon as "democratic reforms" had been introduced in early 1956. The revolt convinced the Chinese that they needed to go slower in the TAR in order to prevent a similar revolt there. However, even though the TAR was calm at that time while eastern Tibet had already erupted in revolt, the Chinese confined the retrenchment to the TAR and continued their reforms in eastern Tibet. Tibetans of eastern Tibet were warned that they should not look to the TAR in the hopes that reforms might be slowed in their areas; while Tibetans in the TAR were warned not to think that the retrenchment was permanent.<sup>43</sup> The PLA attempted to stop Tibetans fleeing to central Tibet; many of the deaths during the revolt were of Tibetans fleeing from eastern to central Tibet.

In his "On Contradictions" speech Mao identified one of the contradictions in Chinese society as the one between the Han and the minority nationalities. Mao assumed that this, like the other contradiction (between the Party and the intellectuals), was non-antagonistic, or "within the people," rather than antagonistic, "between the people and their enemies." In other words, he believed that the minority nationalities had fundamentally accepted Chinese rule and their inclusion within the Chinese state. Therefore, as with the intellectuals, he invited criticism to resolve remaining "non-antagonistic" problems. However, the subsequent criticisms revealed a fundamental rejection of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over non-Chinese people. The

contradictions both with the intellectuals and with the minorities were subsequently redefined as antagonistic and an "anti-rightist and anti-local nationalist" campaign was launched in late 1957.

The "Hundred Flowers" liberalization period produced demands from minority nationalities for increased cultural, religious and political autonomy, for expanded nationality regions and even for separate nationality communist parties. These "local nationalist" phenomena were condemned by the Chinese as a rejection of Chinese culture and Chinese assistance to the nationalities. Mao and the Chinese leadership were surprised and offended by minority nationalities' resistance to Chinese assimilation and their preference for their own cultures or even the autonomy that the Chinese Communists had themselves promised. During the subsequent campaign against local nationalism, minority nationalists were criticized as bourgeois rightists and reactionaries. Local nationalism was condemned by the CCP as contrary to the "inevitable historical merging of nationalities" and the need for nationality unity against foreign imperialism.<sup>44</sup>

The 1957 retrenchment policy in Tibet was not a Chinese recognition of the legitimacy of or the need for Tibetan autonomy. Rather, it was simply an attempt to prevent violent revolt and political embarrassment to China. Despite Mao's illusions that nationality contradictions were non-antagonistic, many Tibetans rejected not just Chinese policies but the fundamental legitimacy of Chinese rule in Tibet. The retrenchment policy failed to prevent revolt in eastern Tibet, which spread to central Tibet and culminated in the revolt in Lhasa in March 1959. After the Tibetan revolt, China abolished the Tibetan government and abrogated the promises of the 17-Point Agreement, saying that the Tibetan government had violated that agreement by organizing and supporting the revolt.

After the revolt, Tibetans' freedoms were severely curtailed by the repression of the revolt and the subsequent institution of "democratic reforms" during which Tibet's traditional leadership and institutions were substantially eradicated. China's promises of autonomy for Tibetans were substantially abandoned during this period. Many Tibetans were arrested or had their property confiscated for participation in or support of the revolt. Many others were killed or escaped into exile. With a few exceptions, the monastic system ceased to exist after the revolt. Monasteries were closed and monks and nuns were forcibly secularized. Monasteries were systematically looted of their precious contents by the Chinese Government.<sup>45</sup> Tibet's traditional leadership, with the exception of a few loyal collaborators, was eliminated during democratic reforms, thus precluding any legitimate exercise of Tibetan autonomy.

The Tibetan Autonomous Region was formally established in 1965, and Tibetans of the TAR were granted national regional autonomy. However, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began shortly thereafter (1966-76), during which Tibetans were subjected to extreme assimilationist pressures and the policy on cultural autonomy was essentially ignored. Tibetan culture was severely repressed. The Cultural Revolution was the most severe expression of Chinese intolerance of Tibetan cultural and national differences. Almost all of the already emptied and looted monasteries were destroyed. Tibetans were subjected to collectivization, during which their economic autonomy was entirely curtailed.

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, having severely repressed Tibetan culture, the Chinese were once again lured into the misconception that Tibetan nationalism and separatism had been eradicated and that any remaining difficulties in Tibet were "non-antagonistic." Therefore, Mao's successors thought that they could safely allow a small degree of Tibetan cultural and religious autonomy. In April 1980 the CCP convened its

first Tibet Work Meeting, during which it was decided to send a high-level fact-finding mission to the TAR, to be led by CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang. Hu's mission visited Tibet from 22 to 31 May 1980. Hu expressed his shock at the poverty of Tibetans he observed. Upon his return to Beijing he proposed a radical reform program for the TAR that included decollectivization, relief from taxation, autonomy in policies applied to Tibet in recognition of Tibet's special characteristics, and a reduction in Han cadres in the TAR, with the exception of the PLA, by 85 percent. Tibetan autonomous districts outside the TAR were directed to implement similar measures. The new policy was announced with the caveat that all affairs in Tibet would continue to be decided under the unified leadership of the Chinese Government. "Vigorous efforts" were to be made to revive and develop Tibetan culture, "so long as the socialist orientation is upheld."<sup>46</sup>

The new economic policy in Tibet, especially decollectivization, led to immediate economic improvements. Tibetan religion and culture rapidly revived. Monasteries were rebuilt, primarily by Tibetans themselves, and became centers not only of Tibetan religion and culture but of Tibetan nationalism. Despite Chinese expectations that the opening of Tibet would impress the outside world with improvements there, it revealed the destruction of Tibetan culture and the continuing repression of Tibetan opposition to Chinese rule. Although the new reform policy was enthusiastically supported by most Tibetans, it was opposed by many CCP cadres in Tibet, both Chinese and Tibetan, who owed their power and positions to the old system.

In 1984, the CCP held its second Tibet Work Meeting. The meeting was presided over by Hu Yaobang, but it abrogated some of his policies, particularly the promise to allow Tibetan autonomy by restricting the number of Han in Tibet. A new strategy of economic development for Tibet was adopted that required the introduction of large numbers of

Chinese cadres and "experts" into Tibet and permitted the entry of thousands of petty entrepreneurs.<sup>47</sup> The abrogation of the promise to reduce the number of Han in Tibet was a violation of Hu Yaobang's promise and of the autonomous right only recently promised in the 1984 autonomy law. The purge of Hu Yaobang in early 1987 also led to a backtracking on other aspects of the liberalization policy and on Tibetan autonomy. The purge of Hu was an indication that the Chinese realized that the liberalization policy had led to an unexpected revival of Tibetan nationalism and of the political issue of Tibet.

In 1987, Deng Xiaoping declared that development in Tibet should not be hindered by "judging the success of our Tibet policy based upon a limitation of the numbers of Han in Tibet."<sup>48</sup> The essence of Deng's Tibet policy was that the CCP would no longer restrict the number of Han in Tibet since they were necessary for Tibet's development. Deng's statement opened the doors to unrestrained Chinese colonization in Tibet.

The revival of Tibetan nationalist resistance culminated in the demonstrations and riots of 1987-89. The period of liberal policies in Tibet, under which some limited autonomy, especially in language and religion, was allowed, came to a definitive end with the imposition of martial law in the TAR after the riots of March 1989. Martial law lasted for a year, after which China began a new policy in Tibet with much less allowance for any aspects of Tibetan autonomy. The prominent role of monks and nuns in the demonstrations led to more restrictions on religion. The death of the Panchen Lama in January 1989 eliminated a prominent and powerful proponent of Tibet's autonomous rights, especially in regard to language.

The hardline faction that predominated in Chinese politics after 1989 reportedly blamed the disturbances in Tibet, and the revival of Tibet as an international issue, on the liberalization policy of the 1980s. Similarly, they had blamed the 1959 revolt on the

retrenchment policy of 1957. Chinese hardliners, and it may be assumed the majority of Chinese policy-makers, apparently learned the lesson that whenever China has allowed a modicum of autonomy in Tibet, as in the period 1957-59 and 1980-89, Tibetan nationalism has rapidly coalesced into anti-Chinese resistance.

In 1992, Chen Kuiyuan, the hardline Chinese Party Secretary in Tibet, declared Tibet's "special characteristics" insufficient reason for why policies in Tibet should differ from those in any Chinese province.<sup>49</sup> In Chinese Communist parlance, "special characteristics" are the code words for minority nationalities' cultural and historical characteristics that justify autonomous status. The particular issue to which Chen was responding was Chinese migration to Tibet. Chen's statement indicated that Tibet's "special characteristics" would not be allowed to restrict Han migration. Chen also renewed restrictions on other aspects of Tibet culture, including language and religion.

In July 1994 the CCP summoned its "Third National Work Forum on Tibet" in Beijing. The primary themes of the forum were "stability and development," as is evident in the title of the final document, "Decision to Accelerate Development and Maintain Stability in Tibet." The expected "cultural" implications of development were indicated by remarks at the forum 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." The influx of even more Chinese into Tibet was justified as necessary for Tibet's development.<sup>50</sup>

The Third Forum determined that the cause of instability in Tibet was the "Dalai Clique's splittist activities." It maintained that the "Dalai Clique," in collusion with the "hostile forces of western countries," hoped to split China and establish Tibetan

independence. In particular, the Dalai Lama was suspected of using religion and reincarnation politics in order to gain influence within monasteries in Tibet. China's competition with the Dalai Lama was characterized as an "antagonistic contradiction with the enemy." Although the CCP remained officially open to a return of the Dalai Lama, the language of the Third Work Forum made it apparent that the CCP was not serious about a dialogue with the Dalai Lama. The primary task in Tibet was defined as the struggle against splittism and to oppose the Dalai Clique. Since monks and nuns had been at the forefront of protests in Tibet, the Third Work Forum decided to place firm restriction upon religion, the rebuilding of monasteries and the numbers of monks and nuns.<sup>51</sup> The Chinese also rejected the Dalai Lama's religious and political influence in Tibet by opposing his selection of the new 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama.

After the Third Tibet Work Forum and the Panchen Lama affair, the Chinese initiated a campaign to eradicate the Dalai Lama's influence in religion as well as politics inside Tibet. The subsequent Patriotic Education Campaign in Tibetan monasteries and nunneries was an attempt to transform Tibetan nationalism into patriotism to China and to eradicate Tibetans' loyalty to the Dalai Lama. Monks and nuns were subjected to lengthy indoctrination sessions and required to denounce the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence, pledge loyalty to China and recognize the Chinese choice of Panchen Lama. Photographs of the Dalai Lama were no longer permitted. Democratic Management Committees supervised by outside officials were instituted in every monastery and nunnery. Many Monks and nuns refused to denounce the Dalai Lama and were forced to leave their monasteries, some escaping to India.

The CCP's Fourth Tibet Work Forum, held in July 2001, confirmed the policy of economic development in Tibet, accompanied by repression of political dissent, cultivation of loyal Tibetan cadres, restriction of

autonomy and fostering of Chinese colonization. In his address to the forum, Jiang Zemin pointed out that the primary tasks in Tibet were still to promote stability and development. The primary source of instability was said to be the Dalai Lama and his separatist activities.<sup>52</sup>

Since 1989, China has instituted a policy in Tibet restricting all aspects of Tibetan cultural and political autonomy that have nationalist implications, which means almost all aspects of autonomy. This has been combined with continuous repression of opposition, "patriotic education" campaigns, and economic development that is intended to benefit loyal Tibetans as well as to support Chinese colonization. The Third and Fourth Tibet Work Forums, along with the Great Western Development Plan, indicate China's policy to resolve the Tibet and Xinjiang issues by means of economic development and its consequent influx of Han Chinese.

In 1997 the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) published its third official report on Tibet, titled Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law. Some of its findings in regard to Tibetan autonomy are as follows:

The nominal autonomy accorded to the TAR and other Tibetan autonomous areas by the PRC Constitution and laws is limited, as most local powers are subject to central approval. The actual extent to which Tibetans control their own affairs is even more circumscribed, however, due to the centralized dominance of the CCP, and the exclusion of Tibetans from meaningful participation in regional and local administration. When Tibetans are in positions of nominal authority, they are often shadowed by more powerful Chinese officials. Every local organ is shadowed by a CCP committee or "leading group," which does not function in keeping with concepts of autonomy. The army and the police are dominated by Chinese. While Tibet historically has often been divided, Tibetan self-rule is also undermined by the current partition of Tibetan territory which places most Tibetans outside the TAR and into four Chinese provinces in which Tibetans constitute small minorities. ...

Since 1950 there has been a large influx of Chinese into Tibet, resulting from several factors: government policy and programs to transfer Chinese, particularly cadres and professionals, to the TAR and other Tibetan regions; government encouragement of voluntary migration; work units bringing ordinary laborers to Tibet for construction projects; and the market-driven migration of ordinary Chinese. ...China's attempt to alter the demographic composition of traditionally Tibetan areas through its population transfer policy is incompatible with any meaningful exercise of autonomy by Tibetans in the PRC.

... A key component of Tibet's unique culture was undermined in the early years of Chinese rule by the destruction of the monastic system. The Cultural Revolution continued that process with the physical destruction of Tibet's unique religious buildings and monuments and an assault on the cultural identity of individual Tibetans. ...Since 1979 the Chinese government has allowed some cultural freedom in Tibet and many monasteries have been partially restored, but permitted cultural activities are restricted and purged of any nationalist content. ...

The predominance of the Chinese language in education, commerce, and administration ...compels Tibetans to master Chinese and is marginalizing Tibetan language. Virtually all classes in secondary and higher education in the TAR ... are taught in Chinese. ... Rather than instilling in Tibetan children respect for their own cultural identity, language and values, education in Tibet serves to convey a sense of inferiority in comparison to the dominant Chinese culture and values. ...

The pattern of development in Tibet, while materially beneficial in its transfer to Tibet of modern technologies such as health care, transport and communications, has marginalized Tibetans, and excluded them from effective participation....

A primary stated goal of the justice system in the TAR is the repression of Tibetan opposition to Chinese rule. A judiciary subservient to Communist party dictates results in abuses of human rights in all of China, but in Tibet the problem is particularly severe due to China's campaign against Tibetan nationalism. ...



The destruction of Tibetan neighborhoods, the forced evictions of Tibetans and demolition of their homes, as well as preferences shown to Chinese in new housing reveal marked discrimination against Tibetans in the housing sphere. ...

Tibetans continue to be detained for long periods without charge or sentenced to prison for peacefully advocating Tibetan independence or maintaining links with the Dalai Lama. ... Torture and ill-treatment in detention is widespread in Tibet. ...

Tibetans' freedom of expression is severely restricted. ...Tibetans are arrested and imprisoned, or sentenced to reeducation through labor, for the peaceful expression of their political views. ...Peaceful political demonstrations in Tibet are typically broken up in minutes and their participants arrested and often beaten, as part of a deliberate policy to suppress any manifestation of pro-independence sentiment. ...Chinese practices preclude and meaningful exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful political assembly and association by Tibetans. ...

There is pervasive interference with religious freedom and activity in Tibet. Monasteries are under the purview of local government and party bodies.

Tibetans are a "people under alien subjugation, entitled under international law to the right to self-determination, by which they freely determine their political status. The Tibetan people have not yet exercised that right, which requires a free and genuine expression of their will."<sup>53</sup>

The PRC's system for nationality autonomy, national regional autonomy, now known as regional ethnic autonomy, has never been fully applied to Tibet, much less been respected in practice. For the first 15 years of Chinese rule over Tibet, from 1951 to 1965, Tibet was in a transitional period between Tibetan and Chinese administrations. China assumed direct administration of Tibet after the revolt of 1959, but, paradoxically, achieved its greatest degree of control over Tibetans' lives almost simultaneous with the establishment of the TAR in 1965 and the granting of national regional autonomy to

Tibetans. Tibetans experienced none of the autonomous rights of the national regional autonomy system until the Cultural Revolution had ended (in 1976) and the PRC had liberalized its policies in Tibet (in 1980). Beginning in 1980 Tibetans experienced some limited autonomy, but hardly as much as was supposedly guaranteed by national regional autonomy. Even this limited degree of autonomy began to be restricted by 1984, when some of Hu Yaobang's policies, particularly those restricting the numbers of Han in Tibet, were reversed. Further restrictions came after the purge of Hu in early 1987.

The limited experiment with the allowance of Tibetan autonomy came to an end with the imposition of martial law in March 1989. Since then Tibetans have experienced few of the rights supposedly allowed under the PRC's autonomy laws except those few individual rights, such as individual religious practice, that have no collective nationalist implications. Tibetans, then, have experienced the autonomous rights supposedly guaranteed to them for only a very brief period and then only in a limited form. Chinese politics and security considerations have precluded the actual exercise of autonomy in Tibetans areas even during those periods when the Chinese have tried to allow some limited autonomy, such as 1957-59 and 1980-89. Autonomy has proven to be incompatible, from the Chinese point of view, with Tibetan nationalism and separatism or even with the survival of Tibetan culture and national identity.

### **Sino-Tibetan Dialogue on Autonomy**

Since 1979, the PRC and exile Tibetans have conducted a dialogue about Tibetan autonomy and a possible return of the Dalai Lama. For the Tibetan side this dialogue has been about the political issue of Tibet and the nature of Tibetan autonomy. However, for the Chinese the only issue has been the personal future of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese side has never admitted that there is any political issue of

Tibet. Nevertheless, for both sides the issue is Tibetan autonomy; for Tibetans it is about the lack of "genuine autonomy" and for China it is about its current system of autonomy and whether it will allow any more autonomy in practice.

After the death of Mao and the purge of the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping instituted more pragmatic policies in the PRC and attempted to finally resolve the issues of Taiwan and Tibet. The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee in December 1978 decided to initiate an economic and cultural liberalization in Tibet and to make overtures to Taiwan in regard to its "peaceful reunification." The CCP hoped that liberalized economic and cultural policies in Tibet would resolve any remaining Tibetan discontent with Chinese rule and even convince the Dalai Lama to return, thus finally resolving the issue of China's legitimacy in Tibet. Liberalization in Tibet was also intended to impress Taiwan with the possibility of autonomy within the PRC.

In its overtures to Taiwan the PRC promised a high degree of autonomy under what was later termed the "one country, two systems" formula devised by Deng Xiaoping. Far from denying the relevance of the Tibetan example for Taiwan, PRC officials suggested that the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet could serve as a model for the peaceful reunification with Taiwan.<sup>54</sup> For the CCP, the salient characteristic of the "Tibet model" was the successful resolution of Tibet's status by means of the 1951 17-Point Agreement. The CCP offered as a model of autonomy not Tibet's history since "liberation," during which the CCP admitted that it had made some "mistakes," but the new policy of liberalization in Tibet since 1979. The CCP was apparently confident that all problems in Tibet would be rapidly alleviated by its new "correct" policy and Tibet could therefore serve as a model of autonomy within the PRC sufficient to entice Taiwan to accept a similar status.

An opening for Sino-Tibetan dialogue had also been created by the Dalai Lama's

definition of the Tibetan issue as the "happiness" of the Tibetan people. In his 10 March 1973 statement the Dalai Lama said, "If the Tibetans in Tibet are truly happy under Chinese rule then there is no reason for us here in exile to argue otherwise." This statement was repeated on 10 March 1978. In 1980 he said, "The core of the Tibetan issue is the welfare and ultimate happiness of the six million Tibetans in Tibet."<sup>55</sup> From 1961 when the Dalai Lama began his annual 10 March addresses until the late 1970s he invariably spoke of the issue of Tibet as independence or freedom. After 1978 he spoke of the issue as being the happiness of the Tibetan people and did not mention independence.<sup>56</sup> The Dalai Lama's statements seem to have been taken by the Chinese, as well as by many Tibetans in exile, as an abandonment of the demand for independence. The Dalai Lama's definition appeared to relegate the issue of Tibet to one that China could claim to have satisfactorily resolved.

In December 1978, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Gyalo Dhondup, was invited to Beijing to meet with Deng Xiaoping to discuss the return of the Dalai Lama. Deng offered to hold discussions on the return of the Dalai Lama with the caveat that Tibet's political status as an integral part of China was not open to discussion. Deng reportedly said: "The basic question is whether Tibet is part of China or not. This should be kept as criteria for testing the truth. ... So long as it is not accepted that Tibet is an integral part of China, there is nothing else to talk about."<sup>57</sup>

Deng's condition on talks was widely misreported in the Tibetan community as meaning "anything but independence can be discussed." This misconception has become virtually an article of faith in the Tibetan and Tibetan activist community.<sup>58</sup> However, what Deng apparently meant was that nothing involving the political issue could be discussed, since all political issues of Tibet evolve from the Tibetan claim to independence. What Deng decreed as a precondition was not that any issue about

Tibet except independence might be discussed but that the "idea of independence," past, present or future, must be rejected before there could be any discussions. Thus, nothing about the political status of Tibet was to be open to discussion, including the nature of Tibetan autonomy and the territorial extent of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Subsequent events demonstrated the accuracy of this interpretation. The Chinese refused to discuss any aspects of the Tibetan issue except the personal status of the Dalai Lama and refused to admit that there was any issue of Tibet's political status.

In April 1982, a delegation composed of three Tibetan Government in Exile officials, led by Lodi Gyari, was invited to Beijing to meet with Chinese officials. The Tibetan representatives proposed that all Tibetan cultural areas should be reunited into a greater Tibetan autonomous region and that this unified TAR should be accorded a higher degree of autonomy than that currently being offered to Taiwan. They suggested that Tibet was due a higher status of autonomy than Taiwan because Tibetans were a non-Chinese nationality.<sup>59</sup> The Tibetans were informed that the difference was that Tibet had already "returned to the Motherland" while Taiwan had not. Taiwan had to be offered concessions in order to secure its return, but the PRC had no reason to make any concessions to Tibet. This explanation revealed the tactical nature of the PRC's concessions on autonomy for Taiwan and, before that, for Tibet.<sup>60</sup>

The same three Tibetan Government in Exile officials returned to Beijing at the end of October 1984. However, PRC officials refused to discuss any issue but the unconditional return of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese complained that "while the Dalai Lama expresses his wish of improving relations with the central authorities some of his followers carry out activities advocating Tibetan independence."<sup>61</sup>

In June 1988, in an address to the European Parliament at Strasbourg, France, the Dalai Lama attempted to revive

negotiations with the PRC by formally accepting Deng Xiaoping's precondition that he "give up the idea of Tibetan independence." The Dalai Lama's proposal was the first official acknowledgment that he would accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in exchange for genuine and well-defined autonomy, although his representatives had negotiated on that basis in the early 1980s. The Dalai Lama justified his change in policy with the rationalization that independence for Tibet was impossible to attain whereas "genuine autonomy" is possible and is capable of preserving Tibetan culture.<sup>62</sup>

China rejected the Dalai Lama's proposal as an attempt to "tamper with history, distort reality, and deny Tibet's status as an inalienable part of China's territory under Chinese sovereignty."<sup>63</sup> The Dalai Lama's Strasbourg Proposal did not fulfill the condition that he "give up the idea of independence" in the sense that the Chinese required, that Tibet had always been and would always be a part of China. The Dalai Lama was required to admit that Tibet was an "inalienable part of China," that Tibet was not only not now independent, but had never been independent. The Dalai Lama's agreement to this version of reality was necessary in order to legitimate China's 1950 invasion of Tibet, and to forever eliminate the possibility of Tibetan independence.

The special autonomous status that the Dalai Lama demanded for Tibet was rejected by the Chinese as perpetuating the separate identity of Tibet and threatening the territorial integrity of the Chinese state. The Dalai Lama's demand for a democratic political system was regarded as an attempt to alter the PRC's system of national regional autonomy and to "negate the superior socialist system established in Tibet." The Dalai Lama's intention, the Chinese said, was "to transform China's internal affairs into a question between two countries and thus to lay the groundwork for an attempt to separate Tibet from the rest of China."<sup>64</sup>

In January 1989, the Ninth Panchen Lama died. The Dalai Lama was unexpectedly invited by the Chinese Buddhist Association to attend memorial services in Beijing. The Dalai Lama asked to also be allowed to visit Tibet and, when this was refused, he declined the invitation. The Tibetan Government in Exile reportedly suspected that this invitation was but another attempt to separate the issue of the Dalai Lama's personal status from that of Tibet and to negotiate directly with the Dalai Lama without any other Tibetan exile participation. Some international and Chinese commentators have suggested that the Dalai Lama miscalculated in refusing this invitation. Had the Dalai Lama gone to China in early 1989 it is possible that the riots in Lhasa in March would not have occurred and martial law not been declared. However, Tiananmen in June 1989 would still have happened, with the subsequent hardening of China's policies on many issues, Tibet included. In fact, some of the officials who had proffered the invitation to the Dalai Lama were purged in the aftermath of Tiananmen.

From 1989 until recently there have been few signs of any Sino-Tibetan contacts or talks, even though China has constantly expressed its willingness to talk with the Dalai Lama if he will give up the independence of Tibet and stop his separatist activities. After the Tibet Work Forum of 1994, the Panchen Lama affair and the subsequent Patriotic Education Campaign, the Dalai Lama was denounced in terms that make it seem unlikely that China is sincere about negotiating with him. The struggle with the "Dalai Clique" was said to be not about autonomy or religion but about preserving China's national unification. The Dalai Lama's proposals for "high-level autonomy" and "self-government of the greater Tibetan region" were condemned as aimed at the realization of Tibetan independence and the splitting of the motherland. The system of national regional autonomy was declared inviolable:

The type of national regional autonomy found in China is one that suits a unified, multinational country. Any place where nationality regional autonomy is practiced is an inseparable part of the People's Republic of China. It is neither "independent autonomy" divorced from the big family of the motherland, nor is it any kind of political autonomy of a semi-independent "autonomous state." The Dalai clique in exile abroad has concocted so-called new recommendations, such as "high-degree autonomy" and "autonomy of the greater Tibetan region," with the backing of the hostile western forces. Their real intention is to separate Tibet from the motherland. The issue between the CCP and the Dalai clique is not about autonomy but about safeguarding the unity of the motherland. ... There is no room for bargaining over the fundamental issue of safeguarding the unity of the motherland.<sup>65</sup>

In 1998, Jiang Zemin, in a press conference with visiting US President Bill Clinton, revealed that there had recently been some private contacts with the Dalai Lama. This raised a flurry of excitement that perhaps another round of contacts and talks was being considered. However, no such talks took place, nor was it ever revealed what were the contacts to which Jiang referred or what, if anything, was discussed. Like China's often repeated willingness to talk with the Dalai Lama, Jiang's remarks seem to have been solely intended to placate Clinton and other western critics of China's Tibet policy, all of whom constantly suggested that China should talk to the Dalai Lama.

Recently, there have been two Tibetan Government in Exile delegation visits to China that have once again raised the hopes of the exiles as well as of Tibetans inside Tibet. In June 2002, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Gyalo Dhondup, made a visit to China and Tibet, ostensibly for personal reasons. In September, a four person Tibetan delegation representing the Dalai Lama, led by his envoy to the United States, Lodi Gyari, made a visit to Lhasa. The same group of Tibetans made a

second visit in late May-early June 2003, but were not allowed to visit Tibet.

After the second visit the delegation reported that they thought that they had improved relations with Chinese leaders, increased the Chinese officials' confidence in dealing with representatives of the Dalai Lama and, hopefully, created conditions for a dialogue about Tibet. Delegation leader Lodi Gyari said that Chinese officials had "explicitly acknowledged the positive efforts made by the Tibetan leadership to create a conducive environment for the continuation of the process."<sup>66</sup> However, in later statements Lodi Gyari complained that there had been no actual dialogue and that, while the Tibetan side had tried to "create a conducive environment for the continuation of the process," China had taken no corresponding actions.<sup>67</sup>

China has shown little evidence, besides the fact of the delegation visits, that it is in a mood to negotiate about Tibet. Since the first delegation visit in September, a popular Tibetan lama in eastern Tibet, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, had been sentenced to death in what appears to be an attempt to link Tibetan nationalism to terrorism. Also in eastern Tibet, Chinese authorities in the Ngaba Autonomous District of Sichuan closed a monastic school run by the Ngaba Kirti monastery.<sup>68</sup> This instance, and the previous closure of the Larung Gar monastic school in a nearby area, demonstrate Chinese intolerance for the teaching of Tibetan language, culture and religion even when privately financed. Previously, it had been thought by some that the tolerance shown to Tibetan culture in areas outside the TAR demonstrated the possibility of Tibetan autonomy within China so long as it had no political implications. However, the recent intolerance for monasteries that grew too large or lamas who became too influential demonstrates that Tibetan religion and culture is considered as much a threat to the Chinese state in areas outside the TAR as inside.

Chinese propaganda on Tibet also offered no indication of a softening of Chinese policy.

The second delegation visit was accompanied by an article from the State Council Information Office stating that there was no issue of Tibet about which China should engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama, that the Dalai Lama did not represent the interests of the Tibetan people, and that Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule was exclusively the product of American imperialist interference in Tibet. The article reiterated China's conditions for dialogue, that the Dalai Lama should abandon his claim for the independence of Tibet, halt any separatist activities, and state that he recognizes Tibet and Taiwan as inalienable parts of China. The article implied that the Dalai Lama had fulfilled none of these conditions. The article questioned how the US could advise China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama about the issue of Tibet when there is no such issue. It asked how the US could demand that China allow Tibetans genuine self-rule when they already have such self-rule under China's system of national regional autonomy. It asked how the US could demand that Tibetans be allowed to preserve their culture and religion and exercise full human rights and civil liberties when they are already preserving their cultural heritage and enjoying full human rights.<sup>69</sup>

In another recent article China rejected the Dalai Lama's "Middle Way" proposal as a solution to the Tibet issue. The Chinese Government dismissed this proposal as simply a strategy to achieve independence in two stages: first, autonomy and then, independence. The article complained that when the Dalai Lama has felt that China is weak and his own position is strong he has promoted independence. When he has felt that China's position is strong and his own is weak he has talked about autonomy. This inconsistency, the article said, proves that the Dalai Lama is insincere in his acceptance of autonomy and that he secretly hopes for the restoration of Tibet's independence. The article denied that Tibet should have the same sort of autonomy as Hong Kong or Taiwan,

which were at one time under foreign rule and need the "one country, two systems" formula in order to reintegrate them into China. Tibet, it said, has always been part of China and it has already undergone liberation and democratic reforms and the system of national regional autonomy has been implemented. Tibet has already been integrated and therefore does not need "one country, two systems."<sup>70</sup>

The visit of Zhu Xiaoming to the US in January of 2002 was, according to some sources, one of the precursors to the latest contacts.<sup>71</sup> Zhu was at that time the head of the nationalities and religion bureau of the United Front Work Department. Zhu participated in a closed conference on Tibet at Harvard University aimed at the promotion of Sino-Tibetan dialogue. Recently, some of what Zhu said to US Government officials during that visit about dialogue with the Dalai Lama was revealed and confirms China's limitations on dialogue to the issue of the Dalai Lama's personal status:

What is the nature of this negotiation? In my view, this negotiation is one between the Central Government of China and a religious figure in exile who is engaged in political activities. It is not a negotiation with the so-called "government in exile." ...I think the negotiation should mainly discuss such questions as how the Dalai Lama and his followers should give up their stand for independence, stop carrying out separatist activities and contribute to the reunification of the motherland and national unity and progress, but not the question related to the legal and political status of Tibet. ...What questions does the US Congress want the Chinese Government to negotiate with the Dalai Lama? The status of Tibet, a "high-level autonomy", or other questions? All these questions are not negotiable.<sup>72</sup>

The Dalai Lama's US visit in September 2003 was accompanied by the usual Chinese official protests as well as by a specific warning that such visits were not conducive to

the dialogue process. Jampa Phuntsok, chairman of the TAR government, said: "We resolutely oppose it [the visit], including Mr. Bush seeing the Dalai. I'm afraid these kinds of activities are not beneficial to the talks with the central government and the Dalai Lama's efforts to improve relations with our government."<sup>73</sup> Jampa Phuntsok also portrayed the Tibetan delegation visits as representing only the Dalai Lama rather than the Government in Exile, and the issue of Tibet as one of the return of the Dalai Lama rather than of the political status of Tibet. He was reported as saying, "The sovereignty issue brooks no discussion. It is also inappropriate for the Dalai Lama to discuss human rights. We can only discuss the Dalai Lama's future."<sup>74</sup> Jampa Phuntsok's warning leads to the speculation that the curtailment of the Dalai Lama's international activities is one objective the Chinese hope to achieve by offering the possibility of dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives.

As this paper was being written the dialogue process, if indeed there ever was any such process, seemed to be stalled. China had not responded to a September 2003 request from the Tibetan side for a third visit. Optimism about dialogue had decreased while the opinion that China had no intention of negotiating about Tibet had increased. Even the possibility of further Tibetan delegation visits to China or Tibet was discounted in advance as little more than a continuation of China's propaganda campaign. China continued to hold out the possibility of such negotiations, as it had in the past, but this appeared to be no more than a diplomatic and propaganda tactic.

### **China's New White Paper on Tibetan Autonomy<sup>75</sup>**

As this paper was going to print, China's State Council Information Office published a new White Paper on Tibet that confirmed many of the above conclusions. The new White Paper, "Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet," apparently closes the door on dialogue with

the Dalai Lama about Tibetan autonomy. China's new White Paper declares that China will not alter the system of autonomy in Tibet and that it envisions no role for the Dalai Lama in Tibet's future. The White Paper says that any idea of a Hong Kong-style autonomy in Tibet, based upon "one country, two systems," is "totally untenable." It advises the Dalai Lama to "truly relinquish his stance on Tibetan independence."

The Chinese White Paper on Tibet is distinguished for its uncompromising position on recent Tibetan history, acknowledging only an unbroken progress in social reform, economic development and human rights since Tibet's liberation in 1951. Its purpose was said to be "to recall the four glorious decades of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet and to give an overview of the Tibetan people's dramatic endeavors to exercise their rights as their own masters and create a better life under regional ethnic autonomy." Unlike previous Chinese propaganda documents on Tibet, the latest version does not mention any mistakes in Chinese policy in Tibet, even during the Cultural Revolution:

Since regional ethnic autonomy was implemented in 1965 in Tibet, the Tibetan people, in the capacity of masters of the nation and under the leadership of the Central Government, have actively participated in administration of the state and local affairs, fully exercised the rights of self-government bestowed by the Constitution and law, engaged in Tibet's modernization drive, enabled Tibetan society to develop by leaps and bounds, profoundly changed the old situation of poverty and backwardness in Tibet, and greatly enhanced the level of their own material, cultural and political life.

This Chinese White Paper is the first one to focus specifically on the system of autonomy in Tibet. Previous White Papers, particularly "Tibet: Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation,"<sup>76</sup> published in 1992, "New Progress in Human Rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region,"<sup>77</sup> published in 1998, and

"The Development of Tibetan Culture,"<sup>78</sup> published in 2000, like the present one, maintained that Tibetans enjoyed full autonomous and human rights due to the national regional autonomy system. Beginning with the 1998 White Paper, *minzu*, previously translated as "nationality," has been translated as "ethnic." National regional autonomy (or regional national autonomy) thereby became regional ethnic autonomy. This appears to be an intentional downgrading, at least for a foreign audience, of the status of Tibet and the other minority nationalities to which the system applies, from nations, or nationalities in Chinese Communist parlance, to ethnic groups. This alteration may have been made so that none of these "ethnic groups" might be thought to be nations deserving of the right of national self-determination. The current paper declares that the Han are 90 percent of the population, while "the populations of the other 55 ethnic groups, including the Tibetan people, are relatively small, and such ethnic groups are customarily called ethnic minorities."

The White Paper says: "Regional ethnic autonomy means, under the unified leadership of the state, regional autonomy is exercised and organs of self-government are established in areas where various ethnic minorities live in compact communities, so that the people of ethnic minorities are their own masters exercising the right of self-government to administer local affairs and the internal affairs of their own ethnic groups." It emphasizes the regional rather than ethnic nature of the system by pointing out that in the TAR there are other ethnic groups besides Tibetans, including Han, Hui, Moinba, Lhoba, Naxi, Nu, Drung and others.

The Chinese White Paper declares that "the Tibetan people enjoy full political right of autonomy," that "the Tibetan people have full decision-making power in economic and social development," that "the Tibetan people have the freedom to inherit and develop their traditional culture and to practice their religious belief," and that "regional ethnic

autonomy is the fundamental guarantee for Tibetan people as masters of their own affairs." It goes on to declare that regional ethnic autonomy is an appropriate and successful system that has achieved both social progress among ethnic groups and has also secured China's national unity:

Historical facts indicate that the institution of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet was the natural result of social progress in Tibet, and that it accords with the fundamental interests of the Tibetan people and the inexorable law of development of human society. ...To institute regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet is the natural requirement for safeguarding national unification and national solidarity, and for the equal development and common prosperity of the Tibetan people and people of other ethnic groups in China. ...The institution of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet is the logical outcome of the Tibetan people's adherence to development along the road of Chinese-style socialism under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and also the basic institutional guarantee for Tibetans to be masters of their own affairs. ...Practice has proved that only by adhering to the leadership of the Communist Party, the socialist road and the system of regional ethnic autonomy can it be possible to truly make the Tibetan people masters of their own affairs....

The White Paper says that the Dalai Lama's proposal that Tibet should enjoy autonomy like the "one country, two systems" or "a high degree of autonomy" as is applied to Hong Kong is "totally untenable":

The situation in Tibet is entirely different from that in Hong Kong and Macao. The Hong Kong and Macao issue was a product of imperialist aggression against China; it was an issue of China's resumption of exercise of its sovereignty. Since ancient times Tibet has been an inseparable part of Chinese territory, where the Central Government has always exercised effective sovereign jurisdiction over the region.

Regional ethnic autonomy is also declared to be unalterable; therefore, the Dalai

Lama's proposals to change the system of autonomy in Tibet are unacceptable:

Regional ethnic autonomy is a basic political system of China, which, together with the National People's Congress system and the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by the Communist Party of China, forms the basic framework of China's political system. The establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region and the scope of its area are based on the provisions of the Constitution and the Law(s) on Regional Ethnic Autonomy and decided by the conditions past and present. Any act aimed at undermining and changing the regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet is in violation of the Constitution and law and it is unacceptable to the entire Chinese people, including the broad masses of the Tibetan people.

China thus declares that it will not entertain the Dalai Lama's proposals for increased autonomy or an expansion of the territory, or "the scope of its area," of the TAR. These are the two main items of the Dalai Lama's proposals: that Tibetans should enjoy "genuine autonomy" and that all Tibetan areas should be joined in a greater Tibetan Autonomous Region. China's attempt to dignify regional ethnic autonomy by associating it with the National People's Congress and the United Front is unconvincing. The NPC, supposedly the highest governing body in the PRC, is considered little more than a rubber stamp for decisions made by the CCP. Similarly, the "system of multi-party cooperation and consultation," that is supposed to operate within the National People's Political Consultative Conference and includes the national minorities, is little more than a facade of democracy behind which the CCP exercises a monopoly of power.

The White Paper denies that the Dalai Lama has any authority to decide anything about Tibet's future, although it maintains a semblance of the policy that the Dalai Lama might be allowed to play some "patriotic" role:



The destiny and future of Tibet can no longer be decided by the Dalai Lama and his clique. Rather, it can only be decided by the whole Chinese nation, including the Tibetan people. This is an objective political fact in Tibet that cannot be denied or shaken. The Central Government's policy as regards the Dalai Lama is consistent and clear. It is hoped that the Dalai Lama will look reality in the face, make a correct judgment of the situation, truly relinquish his stand for "Tibet independence," and do something beneficial to the progress of China and the region of Tibet in his remaining years.

China thus denies that the future of Tibet can be decided by Tibetans alone; rather, it must be decided by all the Chinese people. This policy, also applied to Taiwan, denies to Tibet or Taiwan the right to self-determination. The new Chinese White Paper on Tibet declares that the current system of autonomy is appropriate and successful; therefore, there is no need to talk to the Dalai Lama or anyone else about any alterations or improvements. Chinese leaders apparently no longer feel any need to legitimize their rule in Tibet by allowing the Dalai Lama to return. When the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama dies, China will choose its own 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. Were the 14<sup>th</sup> to return to China before his death, then the reincarnation of the 15<sup>th</sup> might be undisputed. The current policy leaves the door open sufficiently for this possibility. However, China has demonstrated by choosing its own reincarnation of the Panchen Lama that it is willing to impose its choice by force.

### **China's Other Separatist Issues**

China has recently adopted an extremely hard line not only in Tibet but also in regard to its other separatist issues in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The national regional autonomy system in the PRC, now "regional ethnic autonomy," is indisputably the model for the "one country, two systems" type of autonomy applied in Hong Kong, although China now makes the distinction that "one country, two

systems," applies only to those territories that were estranged from Chinese sovereignty due to foreign imperialism. However, China used the excuse of foreign imperialism to justify its invasion of Tibet and Tibet was actually promised greater autonomy than "one country, two systems" theoretically allows. Any sort of regional autonomy, whether based upon nationality (or ethnicity) or economic and political system, is inevitably a separatist issue for the CCP.

China has exploited the international war against terrorism in its campaign against Uyghur separatism in Xinjiang. The PRC managed to have one Uyghur exile organization, the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Nations. China has demanded that more Uyghur organizations, including exclusively information organizations such as the East Turkistan Information Center, be designated as terrorists. Amnesty International recently reported that Chinese intelligence personnel participated in interrogation sessions at the US prison in Guantanamo, Cuba, of some 22 Uyghurs captured by the US in Afghanistan.<sup>79</sup> China has demanded that these Uyghurs be repatriated to China. China organized the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes the PRC, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, primarily to combat religious extremism, separatism and terrorism. At the same time, China has renewed restrictions on Uyghur language, literature and religion.<sup>80</sup>

To counter criticism of its policies in Xinjiang China published its first White Paper on Xinjiang in May 2003. The White Paper attempts to establish the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Xinjiang and the illegitimacy of any separatist sentiments in the area. The main themes are that Xinjiang has been a multiethnic region since ancient times in which many nationalities, the Han included, have merged and blended harmoniously; that many religions have also blended

harmoniously in Xinjiang; that China has exercised sovereignty over Xinjiang since ancient times; that separatism in Xinjiang is the work of a small group of national chauvinists and religious extremists supported by foreign imperialists; that Xinjiang has experienced rapid economic, social, and cultural development since liberation; that the Chinese Government allows cultural and religious autonomy in Xinjiang and respects human rights, and that the various nationalities in Xinjiang live in peace and harmony.<sup>81</sup>

Xinjiang was subjected to Chinese colonization during and after the 1950s by means of the Production and Construction Corps, which follows the traditional Chinese method of colonization of frontier territories by military-agricultural colonies. Tibet remained relatively free of colonization, except for a few areas in northern and eastern Tibet, until the 1980s. China has recently responded to the "terrorist" threat in Xinjiang with a call for more Chinese colonization, which leaves little doubt that Tibet would receive a similar response, should China be able to equate Tibetan resistance with terrorism, or that colonization is considered the ultimate solution in both areas.<sup>82</sup>

After Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 the CCP apparently thought that its "hands off" policy and economic assistance would gradually achieve Hong Kong's loyalty to China. China's promise of democracy in Hong Kong seems to have been premised upon the belief that Hong Kong did not pose a separatist issue. However, the widespread opposition to the Article 23 anti-subversion legislation, culminating in the 1 July 2003 march of some 500,000 people in Hong Kong, aroused the fear of the Chinese leaders that the people of Hong Kong were insufficiently loyal to China. The prospect that the democratic parties might achieve a majority in the Legislative Council and that they might demand direct elections in 2007, as provided for in the Basic Law, apparently moved Beijing to take action.

In the months before the scheduled March election in Taiwan, Beijing began lowering the expectations of the people of Hong Kong about the possibility of elections in 2007. Hong Kong's Basic Law provides for direct elections for the chief executive in 2007 and for the Legislative Council in 2008, if the people so desire, to be decided by the Legislative Council and approved by the chief executive and China's National People's Congress. However, Beijing began by implying that the decision about elections would be made in Beijing, not Hong Kong, and that only "patriots" should be allowed to hold office in Hong Kong.<sup>83</sup> The Chinese Government also reminded the people of Hong Kong that, in the "one country, two systems" formula, one country is more important than two systems. It also said that political rights in Hong Kong are given by the central government, not inherent in the people; that a high degree of autonomy does not mean full autonomy; and, that democratic and constitutional changes in Hong Kong do not fall under what is meant by autonomy. A Chinese Government spokesperson said that the Basic Law in Hong Kong does not mean returning political power to the Hong Kong people. Rather, it means returning Hong Kong to China.<sup>84</sup>

Shortly before the Taiwan election, a vice-chairman of China's National People's Congress said that the Chinese Government would intervene in any emergency in Hong Kong. The spokesman did not say what would be considered an emergency, but it was implied that it would mean any threat to China's national security or sovereignty. Since Beijing has recently characterized Hong Kong's democratic parties and democracy activists as unpatriotic, Beijing might consider it a threat to China's national security if the democratic parties were to win an election in Hong Kong. The implication is that Hong Kong's autonomy is entirely subject to Beijing's veto about any issue. The NPC spokesman went on to make it clear that the relationship between Hong Kong and China's

central government was not one of a sharing of political power. Hong Kong was not to exercise some powers over local affairs while Beijing would be in control over only those matters that concerned national interests. Instead, all affairs in Hong Kong would be under Beijing's direct control.<sup>85</sup>

Immediately following the reelection of Chen Shuibian in Taiwan, China took steps to significantly restrict autonomy in Hong Kong. China's National People's Congress declared that it, not the people of Hong Kong, would decide if and when Hong Kong was to make any changes toward implementing a democratic system. Previously, Beijing had only said that, according to Hong Kong's Basic Law, the NPC should approve of any changes in Hong Kong's political system. The Standing Committee of the NPC said that China's central government had the right to decide from beginning to end any constitutional developments in Hong Kong. It said that the high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong has been authorized by the central government, the constitutional structure of the HKSAR is provided for in the Basic Law, which is formulated and interpreted by the NPC, and that the local Hong Kong government has no authority to decide or change its constitutional system.<sup>86</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the Standing Committee ruled out direct elections for Hong Kong's chief executive in 2007 and for the Legislative Council in 2008. The decision against elections was explained by Beijing's spokespersons as being appropriate since there was no consensus about the development of democracy among the citizens of Hong Kong. In particular, Beijing said, the business community in Hong Kong was opposed to direct elections since they feared that uncontrolled populism would create instability harmful to the economy.<sup>87</sup>

An attempt by Hong Kong's Legislative Council to express its dissatisfaction with the NPC ruling was disallowed. Beijing said that any Legislative Council motions against the NPC decision were unlawful. The NPC

decision was said to be lawful, rational, reasonable and just; therefore, it could not be questioned nor did the Legislative Council have the right to challenge the NPC. Beijing said that no local governmental authority, such as Hong Kong's Legislative Council, had the right to oppose the central government. China is a country with a unitary system, it said, and all power is exercised from top to bottom. All powers belong to the central authorities, it said, which would seem to negate the autonomy that Hong Kong is supposedly allowed to exercise.<sup>88</sup>

The recent reelection of Chen Shuibian in Taiwan has apparently influenced Beijing's decision to essentially abandon the "one country, two systems" promise in Hong Kong. Beijing apparently no longer believes that Taiwan will be persuaded to voluntarily accept the "one country, two systems" formula; therefore, there is less reason to respect the formula as it is already applied in Hong Kong. China no longer has any reason to try to impress Taiwan by allowing autonomy in Hong Kong. With Chen's reelection China has to abandon, at least for the immediate future, any hopes of a peaceful reunification based upon "one country, two systems." The results of the election mean that Taiwan will not take any steps toward reunification and in fact will move further away from China during Chen's next four year term.

China's latest tactic in its attempt to coerce Taiwan to reunify is a plan to enact a "Unification Law" that will make unification a part of China's domestic law. The obvious problem with the idea is that China is incapable of applying the law to Taiwan. However, what its proponents hope to achieve is an ostensible legality for all China's efforts toward reunification, modeled upon the Taiwan Relations Act of the United States, which the US Government employs to defend its support, military and otherwise, of Taiwan. Much as it has coerced every country in the world with which it has diplomatic relations to support its One China policy, China might

coerce other countries to support its Unification Law. In this way China might give some international force to its domestic law in regard to Taiwan much as the US does with its Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>89</sup>

An interesting aspect of the proposed Unification Law is that Chinese Government spokespersons say that the law would potentially apply to Hong Kong and any other separatist issue in China, such as Tibet and Xinjiang. The law could be used to repress any act in support of separatism in any part of China. Tibetans could be accused of treason for advocating independence for Taiwan. Anyone in Hong Kong who advocated independence or even self-determination for Tibet or Taiwan could be accused of treason. Presumably, should China ever assert its sovereignty over Taiwan, anyone there could be accused of treason for having advocated independence at any time.<sup>90</sup>

China's recent hard line policy in Tibet, as expressed in the latest White Paper, is consistent with a similar policy toward all separatist issues. Some say that this hard line is the result of factional conflicts within the CCP leadership, between the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao/Wen Jiabao factions. According to this theory Hu and Wen are unable to institute more liberal policies because of the obstructionism of the Jiang faction. Factional conflict theories are often preferred by those who think that Hu and Wen are actually liberals who are prevented from implementing reforms by more hardline leaders. What may be more accurate than the factional infighting theory is that China's economic engagement policy has not worked in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

China's policy toward Hong Kong has until recently been to not interfere in politics and to rely upon economic assistance to create loyalty among the people. However, Beijing saw that this policy was insufficient to create loyalty; instead, it allowed the democratic parties to dominate the political scene in Hong Kong and threaten to prevail if free elections were allowed. China had a similar policy of

economic engagement with Taiwan, premised upon the belief, consistent with Marxist doctrine, that economic connections and interests between Taiwan and the mainland would cause Taiwan to move in a direction of ever closer engagement with the mainland, finally resulting in unification. This theory has been significantly discredited by the election of Chen Shuibian in 2000 and his reelection in 2004.

China has pursued a similar policy in Tibet. Economic development there is presumed to eventually be capable of achieving the political loyalty of Tibetans to China. In Tibet, as in Xinjiang, the policy of economic development is backed up by and facilitates a policy of colonization. China's resort to colonization in Xinjiang and Tibet reveals the failure of its economic development policy to create loyalty and it belies the promise of the Chinese to allow autonomy. China's experience in Tibet has been that whenever it has allowed any significant degree of autonomy Tibetans have responded with anti-Chinese nationalism. China now has a similar experience in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chinese liberalism in both places has produced not loyalty to China but "local nationalism." China's current hard line in regard to all its separatist issues probably derives from the perception that separatism inevitably grows unless it is repressed. China's experience has been that autonomy fosters separatism; therefore, autonomy cannot be allowed.

## Conclusions

The legitimacy of an assimilationist solution to China's nationality question, its inevitability, or even the voluntary and enthusiastic acceptance of Chinese culture by those being "allowed" to receive it have been virtually unquestioned in Chinese history. The PRC has pursued colonization and assimilation as its policy in Xinjiang and there is no reason to assume that Tibet will be spared a similar fate. The only dispute in Chinese policies about Tibet has been between proponents of a

gradual and voluntary (as much as possible) approach and those who preferred a more rapid assimilation. Current Chinese nationalist imperatives do not provide much hope that China will refrain from the "natural" and ever more feasible assimilationist solution to the Tibet issue.

The Chinese Communist political system has had less tolerance for autonomous social or political groups than at any time in Chinese history, a history not noted for any such tolerance. As Lucian Pye has written: "Under the Communists the denial of legitimacy to autonomous interest groups is more absolute than at any time in Chinese history."<sup>91</sup> In an observation about the history of China's relations with its frontier minorities, Pye has summarized the reason why the Chinese Communists, despite their policies on autonomy, have pursued assimilation, while previous regimes had assimilationist policies but were unable to achieve their goals, thus allowing autonomy in such places as Tibet where Chinese authority did not fully extend:

When the cultural patterns between Han and non-Han were quite different and they each lived in relatively separate worlds, and when the Han Chinese had other pressing concerns and ignored those they considered their inferiors, the national minorities were able in practice to realize considerable autonomy. That is to say, in the past when the policy of the Chinese government was assimilationist, practical factors led to the realities of autonomy. The drift of Tibet and Outer Mongolia toward independence was only the most conspicuous assertion of autonomy by national minorities against weak Chinese authorities. Then came the Communists with their policy of praising autonomy for the national minorities but introducing practices which were more threatening to the autonomy of minorities. Moreover, Peking's increased capacity to penetrate the national minorities has made Chinese authorities more effective in supporting assimilationist policies, particularly as they have become anxious about their security problems.<sup>92</sup>

As another author has written, the PRC's policy toward minorities has been relentlessly assimilationist:

The whole of Chinese policy from 1949 right down to the present day has been aimed at unification, that is, assimilation. The methods have changed from terrorist to liberal according to the "radical" or "pragmatic" periods that mark the history of the PRC--"pragmatic" from 1949 to 1957 and since 1978, and "radical" between 1958 and 1976--but the goal is still assimilation. ...Any manifestation by a nationality, or by some of its members, of its difference is an attack against the unity of China in transition to socialism, against socialism and thus against the direction of history.<sup>93</sup>

Genuine nationality autonomy has been, and is likely to remain, an extremely doubtful prospect within the PRC. Chinese political culture, even under a more democratic political system, is likely to retain much of its authoritarian, collectivist and culturally and politically conformist character. Chinese political culture and nationalism, along with the political realities of economics and the educational and bureaucratic systems, would seem to preclude the possibility of meaningful nationality autonomy within the Chinese state. Tibetans' experience of an absence of any cultural or political autonomy in the past does not lead to confidence in the promises of any Chinese government to allow genuine autonomy in the future.

Tibetan autonomy in relation to China existed only in an archaic, feudal era of empires and indirect rule. Tibetan autonomy existed because China had neither the means nor the need to directly administer Tibet. Once China's claim to dominance over Tibet was threatened by a foreign imperialist rival, Britain, and by the simultaneous development of Tibetan nationalism, China attempted to replace the vague relationship of the past with definitive Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The British attempted to perpetuate the already archaic and outdated system of Tibetan

autonomy under Chinese “suzerainty” for their own interests. However, they were unable to define this relationship except by the use of archaic terminology and they were unable to achieve it in practice. The Chinese were unwilling to recognize Tibetan autonomy or any limitation on China’s claim to sovereignty over Tibet for fear they would lose Tibet to British influence or to an independent status under British protection. Despite being influenced by theories on self-determination and nationality autonomy, both KMT and early CCP policies on nationalities were essentially assimilationist.

The Chinese Communists’ promises of autonomy to Tibetans were contradicted by their intentions to integrate Tibet politically into the Chinese state. They assumed that Tibetans would eventually voluntarily give up their backward culture in favor of the benefits of the advanced Chinese socialist culture. Tibet was meant to undergo “democratic reforms” and “socialist transformation,” along with the rest of China, perhaps at a slower rate, but there was never any idea that Tibet or any other national minority should be permanently immune from such transformation. The debate between Chinese leaders who preferred a gradual approach to Tibetan assimilation, in order to prevent violent resistance, and those who thought that such resistance was inevitable, and therefore a more rapid approach should be pursued, was settled by the failure of the retrenchment policy of 1957 to prevent revolt. The danger of allowing any actual Tibetan autonomy was reaffirmed during the 1980s, when a nominal tolerance for Tibetan autonomy led to the surprising revival of Tibetan religion, culture and nationalism. The PRC has since adopted a strategy of severe restrictions of any Tibetan autonomy, strict political control, economic development and colonization as a solution to the Tibet issue.

At the beginning of the liberalization period, in late 1979, Deng Xiaoping initiated contacts with the Dalai Lama in the hope of achieving, by a return of the Dalai Lama to

China, the final legitimization of China’s sovereignty over Tibet. China limited all contacts to discussion of the Dalai Lama’s personal status alone. China consistently refused to entertain any issue of Tibet’s autonomy or the territorial extent of the TAR. Even after the breakdown of talks in the early 1980s, China maintained that it was willing to allow the Dalai Lama to return if he would abandon his claim to Tibetan independence. The Dalai Lama has done so, but this has been insufficient for a China that demands that he give up the claim that Tibet was ever independent so that China might be freed of the charge of imperialism against Tibet. Chinese leaders have refused to believe that the Dalai Lama’s demand for “genuine autonomy” is anything but a subterfuge and a precursor for independence.

Currently, Chinese leaders have apparently concluded that Tibetan autonomy is intolerable, since almost all aspects of Tibetan culture have nationalist and separatist implications. China’s belief that actual Tibetan autonomy is inevitably associated with the threat of Tibetan independence indicates that China could never be comfortable with any real Tibetan autonomy, an autonomy that inevitably perpetuates a separate Tibetan cultural and national identity and which therefore poses a threat to China’s national unity and territorial integrity. China’s policy on negotiations with the Dalai Lama, under certain conditions, is apparently maintained primarily for diplomatic and propaganda purposes. China’s conditions are impossible to fulfill, especially since they seem to imply that the Dalai Lama should give up all his international activities and perhaps dissolve the Tibetan Government in Exile as well, before the Chinese will even be willing to talk to him, and then only about his personal status.

China has many reasons to not want to “resolve the issue” of Tibet, only one of which is that it denies the existence of any such issue. China maintains that the Tibet issue is already resolved and is therefore understandably

reluctant to reopen it. China does not wish to allow Tibetan autonomy sufficient scope to actually preserve Tibetan national and cultural identity and thus perpetuate Tibetan separatism. China believes that its control in Tibet is secure and it does not fear Tibetan resistance even if the Dalai Lama dies in exile. If at one time Deng Xiaoping hoped to achieve a final seal of legitimacy on China's annexation of Tibet by means of the Dalai Lama's return, current Chinese leaders have apparently decided to await his demise in exile, after which they will choose their own 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. China is apparently confident in a current strategy that combines restriction of all aspects of Tibetan autonomy, repression of all opposition, economic development, and colonization.

The essence of China's position is that autonomy has been bestowed upon Tibet by the Chinese Communist Party due to Tibet's ethnic distinctions from China's Han majority, not because of any national distinctions or past Tibetan political separation from China. To admit to any past Tibetan political separation from China would be equivalent to an admission of Chinese imperialism against Tibet. Therefore, China will bestow upon Tibet whatever autonomy it sees fit, but will not admit that Tibet has any inherent right to autonomy due to its non-Chinese national identity or its history as a "country" less than an integral part of China.

China's new White Paper on Tibet confirms this position. China proclaims its system of regional ethnic autonomy appropriate, sufficient and unalterable. The Dalai Lama's proposal for a "one country, two systems" style of autonomy and an expansion of the TAR to include all Tibetan cultural areas is categorically rejected. The White Paper is described as a reply to the Dalai Lama's proposals and therefore has to be regarded as a rejection of any dialogue with him about Tibetan autonomy. The White Paper denies that the future of Tibet will be decided by the Dalai Lama or even by Tibetans alone without all the Chinese people. Further contacts

between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan exiles can be assumed to be for diplomatic and propaganda purposes, to keep the Tibetan exile community in a perpetual state of incapacitating hopefulness, rather than as evidence of a Chinese desire to "resolve the Tibet issue." Speaking about past as well as possible future visits of Tibetan exile delegations, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said that such visits gave exiled Tibetans the chance to "see for themselves how Tibet has changed over the years. Some people around the Dalai Lama saw for themselves how the people of Tibet enjoy full freedom including religious freedom."<sup>94</sup>

China's recent policies in regard to all its separatist issues, in Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, are consistently hardline. Rather than regard this as a temporary situation, due perhaps to factional infighting within the CCP, it is probably more accurate that autonomy itself can only be a temporary condition within a centralized, unitary, nationalistic Chinese state. Chinese political culture has traditionally been and still is relentlessly assimilationist. Whether the Chinese Communists ever regarded autonomy in sensitive non-Chinese frontier areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang as anything more than a temporary means to achieve assimilation or not, they have certainly discovered that any actual autonomy leads to cultural and political separatism. They have discovered the same phenomenon even in Hong Kong and Taiwan, where a common Chinese cultural heritage does not prevent political separatism. This essential connection between autonomy and separatism probably precludes any meaningful autonomy for any of these areas, but especially in a sensitive non-Chinese frontier area such as Tibet.

Given China's intolerance of Tibetan autonomy, the Dalai Lama's hope that "genuine autonomy" under China is capable of preserving Tibetan cultural and national identity appears unrealistic. Tibetan autonomy under China is now and would always be subject to definition, interpretation

and implementation by the Chinese state. Tibetan acceptance of autonomy under China would alter and jeopardize Tibetan national identity since to do so would be to finally accept that Tibetans are Chinese, of Tibetan minority nationality perhaps, but Chinese nonetheless. This would have an undeniable effect upon Tibetan national identity, one that the Chinese themselves have long been trying to achieve. Even the Tibetan claim to the right of autonomy, based as it is upon Tibet's former independence, would be jeopardized by the Dalai Lama's abandonment of the claim that Tibet was once independent, as the Chinese insist he must before he will be allowed to return.

The Dalai Lama's rejection of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet is all that remains of Tibet's independent national existence. This, too, would be lost if the Dalai Lama accepted Tibetan autonomy and returned to China. The Dalai Lama has few bargaining advantages, but the one he has, his ability to deny the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet, should not be lightly abandoned. There is some evidence that the Dalai Lama himself is coming around to the point of view that his return to Tibet is unlikely and perhaps not even advisable. He has recently said that autonomy is meaningless if Tibetans are a minority in Tibet.<sup>95</sup> And he has said that he might be more useful to the Tibetan cause at this point if he remains in exile.<sup>96</sup>

The strategy of giving up the Tibetan claim to independence and accepting autonomy was premised upon the belief that independence was impossible; therefore, autonomy was the only possibility, but this had to be "genuine autonomy" capable of preserving Tibetan culture and national identity. It was also intended as a strategy to put pressure on China to negotiate about Tibet since the Dalai Lama had theoretically satisfied the requirement that he should give up independence. The Dalai Lama's strategy has not only failed to produce negotiations about autonomy but it is also flawed in its assumption that autonomy is capable of

preserving Tibetan cultural and national identity.

The proponents of the autonomy strategy maintain that it will eventually produce results due to international pressure on China. The strategy is indeed popular among international governments, some of whom do constantly request the Chinese Government to "talk to the Dalai Lama." However, this policy is in fact too convenient for international governments since all they have to do is ask the Chinese to settle their differences with the Dalai Lama without taking any position on what those differences may be. The idea that the Tibet issue is some sort of "misunderstanding" that may be resolved by friendly talks between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government greatly oversimplifies the complexities of the issue.

The Dalai Lama's response to the latest White Paper was that the Chinese Government may not be changing in favor of a more liberal policy in Tibet but that the Chinese people are. He remains incurably hopeful that the Chinese people will become more democratic and more respectful of Tibetan culture and religion. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly said that national borders and national divisions are becoming less important in a globalizing world and that Tibet might benefit, particularly economically, from being a part of China. However, the Dalai Lama and proponents of the autonomy strategy have to dismiss as irrelevant the history of China's assimilationist cultural and political policy, the evidence that autonomy is an inherent threat to China's national identity and territorial integrity, and the lack of any evidence that autonomy is capable of preserving Tibetan cultural and national identity.

The Dalai Lama's policy on "genuine autonomy" under China is based upon the hope, some would say wishful thinking, that China will decide to improve its international reputation by accommodating Tibetans' aspirations for cultural preservation. The Dalai Lama's acceptance of autonomy and his



influence on Tibetans would serve to prevent Tibetan autonomy leading to separatism. The current Chinese government shows little interest in such an offer. Instead, China appears confident that it can control opposition within Tibet, dissolve the internal Tibetan political issue by means of colonization and eventually resolve the international issue by means of coercive diplomacy and relentless propaganda.

Unlike the current Tibetan exile leadership, the Uyghur exile leadership has never believed in the possibility of Uyghur autonomy under Chinese sovereignty and has therefore always maintained that the Uyghurs are entitled to the right of self-determination.<sup>97</sup> The difference may lie in the Tibetan people's traditional hopefulness, Tibetans' experience of a greater degree of autonomy than the people of Xinjiang, the lesser degree of Chinese colonization in Tibet, and Tibet's greater international support, due to Tibet's "Shangri-La" image and the Dalai Lama's international stature. The Dalai Lama's policy on acceptance of autonomy has also prevailed against the opposition of many Tibetans in exile. Nevertheless, given China's intransigence in regard to Tibetan autonomy, Tibetans may also have to consider a self-determination policy.

An advantage of the self-determination argument for Tibet is that it most closely accords with Tibet's actual history of subordination to China in the past and China's denial of its right to independence in the present. Tibetans have developed a sense of Tibetan national identity not only due to Tibet's distinct national characteristics, but also in response to China's dominance of Tibet, especially since 1950. Whether Tibet was independent in the past or was part of China is an argument that will never be

resolved. China can counter the Tibetan claim to independence in the past with evidence that Tibet was under some degree of Chinese domination. However, China has no real answer to the issue of its denial of Tibet's right to self-determination. Self-determination, although unenforceable, retains much of its moral and ideological legitimacy. The issue of Tibet has become primarily ideological; self-determination as a political policy has the advantage that it preserves Tibetan national identity, at least in the ideological sense, whereas autonomy is unable to preserve it in any sense at all.

The fundamental issue if Tibet, as well as of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang, is self-determination. Many Chinese are well aware of this when they say that China must recover Taiwan because if it loses Taiwan then Xinjiang and Tibet might be next. Only a few years ago, at the time of the war in Kosovo, China greatly feared that self-determination was becoming the new norm in international relations. China feared that the doctrine of "humanitarian interventionism" was supplanting the doctrine of state sovereignty. China thought that the doctrine might be used to justify international intervention in Taiwan, Tibet or Xinjiang. Since then the international war against terrorism has firmly reestablished state sovereignty as the predominant principle in international relations. China has exploited the war against terrorism to justify its repression in Xinjiang. It has exploited its ostensible cooperation in the war against terrorism and its mediation in the issue of North Korea in order to lessen international, especially American, criticism of its policies in Tibet and Taiwan. Nevertheless, the principle of self-determination may again arise to challenge unrestricted state sovereignty in China and elsewhere.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hurst Hannum, Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 468.

<sup>2</sup> "Feudalism is a system of government in which a ruler personally delegates limited sovereignty over a portion of his territory to vassals. ...Feudalism is primarily a method of government, not an economic or a social system ..." Herrlee G. Creele, The Origins of Statecraft in China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 32.

<sup>3</sup> Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); "The Frontier in History," in Studies in Frontier History, Collected Papers 1928-1958 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); John K. Fairbank, ed., The Chinese World Order (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Rafe de Crespigny, "The Ch'iang Barbarians and the Empire of Han: A Study in Frontier Policy," in "Papers on Far Eastern History," The Australian National University, Department of Far Eastern History, 1977. Francois Thierry, "Empire and Minority in China," in Gerard Chaliand, ed., Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States (London: Pluto Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Melvyn C. Goldstein, "On Modern Tibetan History: Moving beyond Stereotypes," in Alex McKay, editor, Tibet and Her Neighbours. A History (London: Edition Hansjorg Mayer, 2003), 217.

<sup>5</sup> This is readily acknowledged by Michael van Walt, the Dalai Lama's official legal adviser, who has written: "The establishment of a free association relationship would have the added advantage that it bears significant similarities to the traditional *Cho-Yon* relationship entered into by Tibetan rulers with powerful neighbors in past history." He also describes associative status as "very similar to the protectorate relationship." Michael C. van Walt van Pragg, The Status of Tibet: History, Rights, and Prospects in International Law (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 202.

<sup>6</sup> Warren W. Smith, Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Guiseppi Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1949); Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, Tibet: A Political History (New York: Potala Publications, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> As Max Weber wrote: "This opposition to [secular] political charisma has everywhere recommended hierocracy to conquerors as a means of domesticating a subject population. Thus, the Tibetan, the Jewish and the late Egyptian hierocracy were in part supported, and in part directly created, by foreign rulers." Max Weber, Economy and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 1160. Weber defines a hierocracy as "an organization which enforces its order through psychic coercion by distributing or denying religious benefits." *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>8</sup> Owen Lattimore recognized this characteristic of the Tibetan political system: "Politically, the supreme pontiffs of Tibet have from the beginning acted as the agents of one or another alien overlord. ... The supreme pontiff, in other words, is to be understood as the symbol of stagnation within Tibet and of alien imperial power over Tibet." Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, 227.

<sup>9</sup> Luciano Petech, "Tibetan relations with Sung China and with the Mongols," in Morris Rossabi, ed., China Among Equals (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Richardson, "Tibetan Precis," in High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture (London: Serindia Publications, 1998), 625.

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Lamb, The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet, 1904-1914, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Richardson, "Tibetan Précis," 626.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 625.

<sup>14</sup> Sun Yat-sen, "Democracy at Work," in Leonard S. Hsu, Sun Yat-sen, His Political and Social Ideals (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1933), 325.

<sup>15</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, China's Destiny (New York: Roy Publishers, 1947), 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Stalin, Marxism and the National-Colonial Question (Moscow: Proletarian Publishers, 1975).

<sup>20</sup> Walker Connor, The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

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- <sup>21</sup> Conrad Brandt, Benjamin Schwartz and John Fairbank, A Documentary History of Chinese Communism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), 64.
- <sup>22</sup> Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government," 24 April 1945, in Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, vol III (Peking: Foreign Languages Press), 305.
- <sup>23</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, "National Independence and Racial Equality," The Collected Wartime Messages of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek: 1937-1945, comp., Chinese Ministry of Information (New York: John Day Company, 1949), 854.
- <sup>24</sup> Department of State Outgoing Telegram, 6 November 1959, National Archives, 793B.00/11-659.
- <sup>25</sup> George Moseley, The Party and the National Question in China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 56.
- <sup>26</sup> Zhou Enlai, "Some Questions on Policy towards Nationalities," *Beijing Review*, 3 March 1980.
- <sup>27</sup> Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 29 September 1949, in Theodore H.E. Chen, ed., The Chinese Communist Regime: Documents and Commentary (New York: Praeger, 1967), 34.
- <sup>28</sup> General Program of the People's Republic of China for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy for Minorities, 9 August 1952, in Policy towards Nationalities of the People's Republic of China (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1953).
- <sup>29</sup> The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 20 September 1954, in Henry Schwartz, comp., Chinese Policies towards Minorities (Western Washington State College, 1971), 82.
- <sup>30</sup> Zhou Enlai, "Some Questions on Policy towards Nationalities," *Beijing Review*, 3 March 1980.
- <sup>31</sup> "Electoral Regulations for Tibet Made Public," *New China News Agency*, 30 March 1963, in Tibet 1950-67 (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1967), 503.
- <sup>32</sup> *Radio Peking*, August 1965, as quoted by the US Ambassador to the United Nations, in United Nations General Assembly Twentieth Session, 17 December 1965.
- <sup>33</sup> Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1982. The articles on national regional autonomy in the 1982, 1988 and 1993 Constitutions were identical. Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1988; Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1993.
- <sup>34</sup> Law of the People's Republic of China on National Regional Autonomy, 1984, in *China Law Computer Assisted Legal Research Center*, Beijing University; "The System of Self-Government of Ethnic Autonomous Areas" and "Local Legislation in Ethnic Autonomous Areas," at [www.china.org.cn/english](http://www.china.org.cn/english); "Regional Autonomy for Minorities," *Beijing Review*, 11 June 1984.
- <sup>35</sup> "Regional Autonomy and Special Policies," *Beijing Review*, 23 November 1987.
- <sup>36</sup> The Myth of Tibetan Autonomy (Washington: International Campaign for Tibet and International Human Rights Law group, 1994). The "Four Fundamental Principles" were that China must adhere to socialism, the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.
- <sup>37</sup> "Regional Autonomy for Minorities," *Beijing Review*, 11 June 1984.
- <sup>38</sup> News Review: Reports from Tibet, 2001 *Tibet Information Network*, London, 2002
- <sup>39</sup> "Local Legislation in Ethnic Autonomous Areas," at [www.china.org.cn/english](http://www.china.org.cn/english).
- <sup>40</sup> Perry Keller, "Human Rights within Chinese Municipal Law," in Tibet: The Position in International Law (London: Serindia, 1994), 64.
- <sup>41</sup> "Text of Agreement on Measures for Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," *New China News Agency*, 27 May 1951.
- <sup>42</sup> Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People," in Bowie and Fairbank, Communist China 1955-1959, 287.
- <sup>43</sup> "Struggle for the Sacred Task of National Defense," in Current Background, no 490 (Hong Kong: United States Consulate).
- <sup>44</sup> Donald H. McMillen, Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1997 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979); Lee Fu-hsiang, "The Turkic-Moslem Problem in Sinkiang: A Case Study of the Chinese Communists' Nationality Policy." (Ph.D. diss. Rutgers University, 1973), 337, 352)
- <sup>45</sup> Tibet Under Chinese Communist Rule: A Compilation of Refugee Statements: 1958-1975 (Dharamsala: Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1976), 58, 62, 80, 87, 94, 105; Dawa Norbu, Red Star Over Tibet (New York: Envoy Press, 1987), 199.
- <sup>46</sup> "New Economic Policy," *Beijing Review*, 16 June 1980.
- <sup>47</sup> "Tibet Carries out New Policies," *Beijing Review*, 21 May 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Deng Xiaoping, "Speeding up Tibet's Development on the Basis of Equality among Various Nationalities," quoted in "Tibet Article Urges 'Correct' Nationalities Views," Lhasa, *Tibet Daily*, 4 July 1994 in FBIS-CHI-94-137, 18 July 1994, 77. The origin of Deng's article was actually a few remarks made by Deng in defense of China's Tibet policy to former US president Jimmy Carter during Carter's visit to China in 1987. In reply to a question in regard to China's population transfer to Tibet, Deng said that it was "inappropriate to judge China's nationalities policies and the Tibet issue against the number of Han people in Tibet ... The key criteria should be what benefits will rapidly accrue to the people of Tibet and how Tibet should be made to develop rapidly and stand at the forefront of China's "Four Modernizations." Deng's remarks were later worked up into what was purported to be a "guiding document" on Tibet policy. *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995 (New York: Tibet Information Network, Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1996), 20. Respect for minorities' "special characteristics" had been condemned as backward before, in 1957 during the Anti-Rightist and Anti-Local Nationalist Campaign. In 1956 Mao had criticized the policy of excluding minorities from socialist transformation, because of their "special characteristics," as rightist. Chen condemned the exclusion of Tibetans from Chinese-style economic and social development as leftist.

<sup>50</sup> "Third National Work Conference on Tibet 20-23 July," *New China News Agency*, Beijing, 26 July 1994.

<sup>51</sup> Cutting Off the Serpent's Head, 155

<sup>52</sup> News Review: Reports from Tibet, 2001 *Tibet Information Network*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law (Geneva, International Commission of Jurists, 1997), 14-21. The first ICJ report, published in 1959, was The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law. The second ICJ report, published in 1960, was Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic: A Report to the International Commission of Jurists by its Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet.

<sup>54</sup> In its refutation of the "Tibet model" for Taiwan, the Asian People's Anti-Communist League of Taiwan referred to an article by Ngawang Jigme Ngapo in which he suggested that the liberation of Tibet could serve as a model for Taiwan, particularly that the problem could be resolved through a negotiated agreement similar to the 17-Point Agreement of 1951, which he had negotiated and signed and which had resolved the status of Tibet. The True Features of Chinese Communist "Tibet Model", (Taipei: Asian People's Anti-Communist League, 1982), 2. Dawa Norbu also refers to a statement by Wang Bingnan, who had been China's ambassador to Poland in the 1950s, that Tibet could be a model for Taiwan. Dawa Norbu, China's Tibet Policy (Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 2001), 303.

<sup>55</sup> The Collected Statements, Interviews and Articles of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Dharamsala: Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1986), 41, 52, 60.

<sup>56</sup> In 1973 and 1974 the Dalai Lama mentioned the freedom of the Tibetan people. *Ibid.*, 42, 43. In 1975 he spoke of the freedom and independence of Tibet. *Ibid.*, 46. In 1976 he spoke of "Tibetan freedom" and "national freedom of the Tibetan people." *Ibid.*, 48. In 1977 he spoke, for the last time, of the independence of Tibet. *Ibid.*, 51. The Dalai Lama has recently said that he contemplated giving up the claim to independence and accepting autonomy under China as early as 1973. The Dalai Lama was quoted as saying that his "spirit of Middle Way approach was developed around 1973/1974." "Wen Plays Precondition Card, His Holiness Firm on Genuine Autonomy," *TibetNet*, Rome, 26 November 2003. Presumably, the Dalai Lama's changed sentiments had something to do with the 1973 American rapprochement with China.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Dawa Norbu, China's Tibet Policy, 316.

<sup>58</sup> The Dalai Lama has recently said that his "Middle Way approach is based on the statement of the late Deng Xiaoping that except for the independence of Tibet all other questions could be discussed and resolved." "Wen Plays Precondition Card, His Holiness Firm on Autonomy," *Tibetnet*, 26 November 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Dawa Norbu, "China's Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1978-90: Prenegotiation Stage or Dead End?" *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 64, no. 3 (Fall 1991), 357.

<sup>60</sup> "Policy toward Dalai Lama," *Beijing Review*, 15 November 1982.

<sup>61</sup> "Beijing Receives Dalai Lama's Envoys," *Beijing Review*, 3 December 1984, 9.

<sup>62</sup> In his Strasbourg Proposal the Dalai Lama defined Tibet's future status as a "self-governing political entity ... in association with the People's Republic of China." The status of association proposed by the Dalai Lama was taken from United Nations resolutions on the means by which self-determination might be achieved, one of which is by "free association." Associative status is based upon a free choice by the people in question and a right to review that choice at any time. This freedom of choice also implies that independence might be chosen. Van Walt van Praag, The Status of Tibet, 201, 202.

<sup>63</sup> "The Dalai Lama's 'New Proposal,'" *Beijing Review*, 1 August 1988.

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- <sup>64</sup> "What Is Behind the Dalai Lama's 'Plan,'" *Beijing Review*, 19 February 1990.
- <sup>65</sup> "Nationality Autonomy Key to Tibet's Success, FBIS-CHI-95-205, 24 October 1995.
- <sup>66</sup> "Statement by Special Envoy Lodi Gyari, Head of the Delegation Sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China," Dharamsala, 11 June, 2003
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- <sup>68</sup> "Ngaba Kirti Monastic School Closed, Patron Disappears," *Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy*, Dharamsala, 30 September 2003.
- <sup>69</sup> "What is the Real Intention of the United States," *Xinhua*, 9 June 2003, in FBIS, CPP20030609000063.
- <sup>70</sup> "Dalai Lama Behaving Disingenuously by Pushing 'Middle Way'," *China Daily*, Beijing, 22 July 2003, in FBIS, CPP20030722000010.
- <sup>71</sup> In an address to the European Parliament Forum on Tibet, Kelsang Gyaltsen, co-leader of the delegation that visited Tibet said: "In January 2002 a first face-to-face meeting took place outside of China with Chinese officials responsible for China's Tibet policy. This meeting paved the way for the visit of a four-member Tibetan delegation to China and to the Tibetan capital Lhasa from September 9 to 25, 2002. "Address of Mr. Kelsang Gyaltsen, Envoy of H.H. the Dalai Lama to the European Parliament Forum on Tibet," *TibetNet*, 12 November 2003.
- <sup>72</sup> Cheng Ran, "A Discussion on Tibetan Issue with American Experts on China," *China News and Report*, 17 September 2002.
- <sup>73</sup> "China Protests Dalai Lama's US Trip," Beijing, *AFP*, 28 August 2003.
- <sup>74</sup> "At Dalai Lama's Former Palace, Reverence," Christopher Bodeen, *Associated Press*, 10 September 2003.
- <sup>75</sup> "Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, May 2004.
- <sup>76</sup> "Tibet—Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, September 1992.
- <sup>77</sup> "New Progress in Human Rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, February 1998.
- <sup>78</sup> "The Development of Tibetan Culture," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, June 2000.
- <sup>79</sup> "Chinese Officials Helped US Interrogators at Guantanamo Bay: Amnesty," *AFP*, 26 May 2004; "Uighurs Fleeing Persecution as China Wages Its War on Terror," *Amnesty International*, 7 July 2004.
- <sup>80</sup> "Uighurs Fleeing Persecution."
- <sup>81</sup> "History and Development of Xinjiang," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, May 2003.
- <sup>82</sup> Wang Lequan, the Chinese Communist Party secretary in Xinjiang, recently said, "The most difficult thing in the development of China's western region is the lack of talented people." He said that Xinjiang needed "talented people," and "intellectual resources" from the coastal regions of China. He complained of the "shortage of qualified personnel and the poor overall quality of the workers" in Xinjiang. "Talented People Are Important in Developing China's Western Region," *Beijing Guangming Ribao*, 19 December 2003, in FBIS CPP20040102000054.
- <sup>83</sup> "Patriotism Should Form Bedrock of All Who Rule," *Beijing China Daily*, 25 February 2004, in FBIS CPP20040225000073.
- <sup>84</sup> "China's NPC to Interpret Basic Law Annexes for Hong Kong," *Beijing China Daily*, 30 March 2004, in FBIS CPP20040330000098.
- <sup>85</sup> "Beijing May Impose State of Emergency in HK during Crisis," *Hong Kong South China Morning Post*, 13 March 2004, in FBIS CPP20040313000049; "China: State of Emergency Law Raises Speculation of Use against Hong Kong, Taiwan," FBIS Report, 10 May 2004, CPP20040510000179.
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- <sup>87</sup> "Ninth Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> NPC Standing Committee Concludes, Adopts Decision on Method of Electing Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive in 2007 and Legislative Council in 2008," *Xinhua*, 26 April 2004, English translation in FBIS CPP200404266000048.
- <sup>88</sup> "China: Any LegCo Motions Against NPC Decision 'Unlawful'," *Beijing Xinhua*, 7 May 2004, in FBIS CPP20040507000153.
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<sup>90</sup> "NPC Standing Committee Members Say 'Unification Law' Applies to HK, Other Areas," *Hong Kong Hsiang Kang Shang Pao*, 22 May 2004, in FBIS CPP20040522000025.

<sup>91</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 20.

<sup>92</sup> Lucian W. Pye, "China: Ethnic Minorities and National Security," in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 510.

<sup>93</sup> Francois Thierry, "Empire and Minority in China," 93.

<sup>94</sup> "Beijing Won't Accept Dalai Lama Terms," *The Asian Age*, 21 July 2004, in Phayul.com.

<sup>95</sup> "Dalai Lama Denounces 'Cultural Genocide'," *Reuters*, Madrid, 9 October 2003.

<sup>96</sup> The Dalai Lama was quoted as saying, "Some leader in a western country - I cannot tell you who - has told me it is very dangerous to return now. As soon as Chinese government begins to think about a new way of approach regarding Tibet issue then I think it's right time. Then I can make some contribution. Now, this is the best way to serve the Tibetan people. I can do more outside Tibet than inside Tibet." Older Tibetans long to see him return, he says, but the more politically minded Tibetans believe that he is better able to serve their cause in the west. Gillian Bowditch "Peaceful Protest," *Scotsman.com*, 8 November 2003

<sup>97</sup> Erkin Alptekin, President, World Uighur Congress, personal communication, Washington, DC, 28 May 2004.





## **Background Information**

## Background of the Tibet Conflict

Tibet has been a focus of international concerns for close to a century. Tibet's contested status as an independent state or autonomous region, the conditions prevailing within its territory—indeed, even its very borders—have all been the subject of controversy and sometimes violent struggle.

In 1911, when the Qing, China's last imperial dynasty, collapsed, Tibet emerged as a *de facto* independent state. That independence was not recognized by China, nor was it formally and unambiguously acknowledged by Britain, India or any other state. Nevertheless, under the government of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet did effectively function independently of China, with the requisites generally expected of states. However, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Tibet's *de facto* independence came to an end. In October of 1950, the People's Liberation Army, already in control of Tibetan-inhabited territory outside the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama's government, crossed the line into territory controlled by the Tibetan government; and Tibet was formally incorporated into the People's Republic of China by means of an agreement signed in May 1951. Friction, ambiguous expectations and interpretations of Tibet's status under that agreement, and the harsh and often brutal implementation of Chinese socialism in Tibetan-inhabited areas in the eastern portions of the Tibetan Plateau, all worked to spark a revolt in the 1950s that led ultimately to fighting in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, and the flight of the Dalai Lama and well over 100,000 Tibetans into exile, mostly in India and Nepal. Subsequent decades witnessed the implementation of Chinese policies on the Tibetan Plateau that followed what often seemed like radically different directions: the establishment of a Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965, the attempt to suppress a separate Tibetan identity in the 1960s and 1970s, economic liberalization and a relative loosening of cultural and religious restrictions in the 1980s, repression of any signs of separatist tendencies and allegiance to the Dalai Lama in the 1990s, etc. Such ambiguities and apparent contradictions have served to exacerbate the Sino-Tibetan relationship.

Internationalization of the Tibet issue followed upon resolutions passed by the U.N. General Assembly in 1959, 1960, and 1961, one of which explicitly supported the right of the Tibetan people to "self-determination." The result of this history has been to place legitimacy at the foundation of many of the other aspects of the Tibetan issue. Thus, more than half a century after the incorporation of Tibet into the PRC, questions of economic development, cultural freedom, human rights, and demographics in Tibet all stand against the background of questions about the legitimacy of Chinese rule in the region. This sense of contested authority is further supported as much by China's protestations that there is no issue of Tibet (while at the same time insisting that the Dalai Lama must acknowledge that Tibet has historically been a part of China) as it is by the activities and pronouncements of Tibetan exiles relating to Tibet's right to independence or—on the part of the Dalai Lama—"real autonomy."

Attempts to resolve the Tibetan issue since the late 1970s have focused on formal and informal contacts and discussions between representatives of the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile on the one hand, and the Chinese government on the other. These have taken place periodically over the last twenty-five years, with no real resolution. Over the last two years such contacts have revived again, but even the nature of those contacts is disputed by both parties. For more than a decade the Dalai Lama has been able to meet with several world leaders who, at his urging, have periodically called on the Chinese government to approach or respond to him in an attempt to resolve the Tibetan issue.

Since 1988, the Dalai Lama has conceded the point of Chinese sovereignty and pressed Western governments to work for the preservation of Tibetan culture; and in 1989, the Dalai Lama was accorded the Nobel Peace Prize for his activities in support of Tibet. Nevertheless, the process dialogue and confidence building remains at an impasse, and there is a lingering pessimism about any resolution of the Tibetan issue during the Dalai Lama's lifetime.

# Map of the Tibetan Plateau



● Cities and Towns

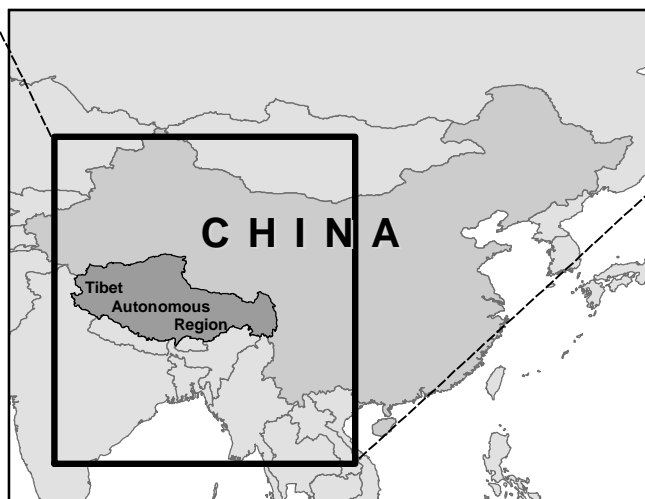
~ TAR Boundary

~ Historical Tibet (est.)

Note: Kham region is largely divided between the TAR and Sichuan Province with smaller portions in Qinghai and Yunnan; Amdo region includes most of Qinghai with small portions also in Sichuan and Gansu.

*Note: Map boundaries and locations are approximate. Geographic features and their names do not imply official endorsement or recognition by the UN.*

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## **Project Information**



## **The Dynamics and Management of Internal Conflicts in Asia**

### **Project Rationale, Purpose and Outline**

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#### ***Rationale***

Internal conflicts have been a prominent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945. Asia has witnessed numerous civil wars, armed insurgencies, coups d'état, regional rebellions, and revolutions. Many have been protracted; several have far reaching domestic and international consequences. The civil war in Pakistan led to the break up of that country in 1971; separatist struggles challenge the political and territorial integrity of China, India, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; political uprisings in Thailand (1973 and 1991), the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1986), Taiwan, Bangladesh (1991), and Indonesia (1998) resulted in dramatic political change in those countries; although the political uprisings in Burma (1988) and China (1989) were suppressed, the political systems in these countries as well as in Vietnam continue to confront problems of political legitimacy that could become acute; and radical Islam poses serious challenges to stability in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India. In all, millions of people have been killed in the internal conflicts, and tens of millions have been displaced. And the involvement of external powers in a competitive manner (especially during the Cold War) in several of these conflicts had negative consequences for domestic and regional security.

Internal conflicts in Asia (as elsewhere) can be traced to three issues—national identity, political legitimacy (the title to rule), and distributive justice—that are often interconnected. With the bankruptcy of the socialist model and the transitions to democracy in several countries, the number of internal conflicts over the legitimacy of political system has declined in Asia. However, political legitimacy of certain governments continues to be contested from time to time and the legitimacy of the remaining communist and authoritarian systems is likely to confront challenges in due course. The project deals with internal conflicts arising from the process of constructing national identity with specific focus on conflicts rooted in the relationship of minority communities to the nation-state. Here too many Asian states have made considerable progress in constructing national communities but several states including some major ones still confront serious problems that have degenerated into violent conflict. By affecting the political and territorial integrity of the state as well as the physical, cultural, economic, and political security of individuals and groups, these conflicts have great potential to affect domestic and international stability.

#### ***Purpose***

The project investigates the dynamics and management of five key internal conflicts in Asia—Aceh and Papua in Indonesia, the Moro conflict in the southern Philippines, and the conflicts pertaining to Tibet and Xinjiang in China. Specifically it investigates the following:

1. Why (on what basis), how (in what form), and when does group differentiation and political consciousness emerge?
2. What are the specific issues of contention in such conflicts? Are these of the instrumental or cognitive type? If both, what is the relationship between them? Have the issues of contention altered over time? Are the conflicts likely to undergo further redefinition?
3. When, why, and under what circumstances can such contentions lead to violent conflict? Under what circumstances have they not led to violent conflict?
4. How can the conflicts be managed, settled, and eventually resolved? What are policy choices? Do options such as national self-determination, autonomy, federalism, electoral design, and consociationalism exhaust the list of choices available to meet the aspirations of minority communities? Are there innovative ways of thinking about identity and sovereignty that can meet the aspirations of the minority communities without creating new sovereign nation-states?
5. What is the role of the regional and international communities in the protection of minority communities?
6. How and when does a policy choice become relevant?

### ***Design***

A study group has been organized for each of the five conflicts investigated in the study. With a principal researcher each, the study groups comprise practitioners and scholars from the respective Asian countries including the region or province that is the focus of the conflict, the United States, and Australia. For composition of study groups please see the participants list.

All five study-groups met jointly for the first time in Washington, D.C. from September 29 through October 3, 2002. Over a period of four days, participants engaged in intensive discussion of a wide range of issues pertaining to the five conflicts investigated in the project. In addition to identifying key issues for research and publication, the meeting facilitated the development of cross country perspectives and interaction among scholars who had not previously worked together. Based on discussion at the meeting five research monograph length studies (one per conflict) and twenty policy papers (four per conflict) were commissioned.

Study groups met separately for the second meeting. The Aceh and Papua study group meetings were held in Bali on June 16–17, the southern Philippines study group met in Manila on June 23, and the Tibet and Xinjiang study groups were held in Honolulu on August 20–22, 2003. The third meeting of all study groups was held in Washington, D.C. from February 28 to March 2, 2004. These meetings reviewed recent developments relating to the conflicts, critically reviewed the first drafts of the policy papers prepared for the project, reviewed the book proposals by the principal researchers, and identified new topics for research.



### ***Publications***

The project will result in five research monographs (book length studies) and about twenty policy papers.

*Research Monographs.* To be authored by the principal researchers, these monographs present a book-length study of the key issues pertaining to each of the five conflicts. Subject to satisfactory peer review, the monographs will appear in the East-West Center Washington series *Asian Security*, and the East-West Center series *Contemporary Issues in the Asia Pacific*, both published by the Stanford University Press.

*Policy Papers.* The policy papers provide a detailed study of particular aspects of each conflict. Subject to satisfactory peer review, these 10,000- to 25,000-word essays will be published in the East-West Center Washington *Policy Studies* series, and be circulated widely to key personnel and institutions in the policy and intellectual communities and the media in the respective Asian countries, United States, and other relevant countries.

### ***Public Forums***

To engage the informed public and to disseminate the findings of the project to a wide audience, public forums have been organized in conjunction with study group meetings.

Two public forums were organized in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the first study group meeting. The first forum, cosponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society, discussed the Aceh and Papua conflicts. The second forum, cosponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, the Asia Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center, and the Sigur Center of The George Washington University, discussed the Tibet and Xinjiang conflicts.

Public forums were also organized in Jakarta and Manila in conjunction with the second study group meetings. The Jakarta public forum on Aceh and Papua, cosponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, and the southern Philippines public forum cosponsored by the Policy Center of the Asian Institute of Management attracted key persons from government, media, think tanks, activist groups, diplomatic community, and the public.

In conjunction with the third study group meetings, also held in Washington, D.C., three public forums were offered. The first forum, cosponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society, addressed the conflicts in Aceh and Papua. The second forum, cosponsored by the Sigur Center of The George Washington University, discussed the conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang. A third forum was held to discuss the conflict in the southern Philippines. This forum was cosponsored by the United States Institute of Peace.

### ***Funding Support***

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# *Working Papers*

## Previous Publications

### **Working Paper Number 1, May 2004**

Demographics and Development in Xinjiang after 1949

Dr. Stanley Toops

