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Tibetan Buddhism and the Chinese Communist Party: Moving Forward in the 21st Century

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Claremont McKenna College

Tibetan Buddhism and The Chinese Communist Party: Moving
Forward in the 21st Century

Submitted to

Professor Gaston Espinosa

AND

Dean Hess

BY

Evan Zwisler

FOR

Senior Thesis

(2011-2012)

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to several people who have inspired, helped, and guided me throughout this process. First off I would like to dedicate this to the good people of Machik. The work I did with them in 2011 really opened my eyes to the abuses of the Chinese Communist Party in minority regions in China. Losang and Tashi Rabgey were instrumental in my understanding of the problem in the Tibetan plateau.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to Professor Gaston Espinosa. From the first class I took with you in 2008 my life, and interpretation of the world, has been changed. Thank you so much for reading my thesis and guiding me through the process and helping me to channel my creative energies. I know I am not the easiest person to work with but I think we did something great.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents. You have been more than supportive and extraordinary role models for me, thank you.

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I would like to thank the staff at Machik's Summer Enrichment Program, especially Losang and Tashi Rageby. My time in Western China was eye opening for me. I was aware of the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Chinese government, but seeing them first hand was entirely different. Much of my thesis has to do with the possibility for reconciliation and improving the lives of the Tibetans and only through Machik's Summer Enrichment Program was I able to meet a large amount of Tibetans and discover what they wanted. I am indebted to you for showing me this. Losang and Tashi, I am truly beholden to you for providing me with the intellectual and humanitarian background for what is happening in Tibet, you gave me the on the ground experience that I could never have gotten from books. Our conversations were also instrumental in my formulation of my thesis.

Introduction

Though I had limited exposure to religion in my youth, a trip I took in 2007 rocked my perspective. I had trouble breathing after I departed the plane on the Tibetan Plateau. It was a shock to be short of breath after only climbing a flight of stairs or walking a short while. Even though I had grown up in China my whole life, I was shocked at how different Tibet was. While my lungs adapted after a couple days, 17 year olds are surprisingly spry, I never shook the feeling that something was off, something was wrong in Tibet. With my limited understanding of the situation I couldn't grasp the intricacies of the issue, nor understand the bigger picture.

Looking out from the Potala Palace, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama and one of the most holy places in Buddhism, I saw a statue that resembled the monument dedicated to the lost soldiers of Iwa Jima; it showed five men raising a Chinese flag on a rock. The inscription dedicated the statue to the brave men and women who "liberated Tibet." I asked my tour guide who Tibet was liberated from and the sadness in his eyes was tangible. "I don't know," he replied and then changed the subject.

Before my visit to Tibet in 2007 I was always interested in its relationship with China. How does a nation of people, who are ethnically different, hold different social values, and whose political infrastructure, deal with living under an oppressive regime? After volunteering with the organization Machik, an organization based in Washington D.C. that aims to strengthen communities on the Tibetan plateau, from July to September in 2011 I began to wonder what could be done to alleviate the suffering of the Tibetan people, where do they go from here? With my unique background, extensive research, and hand on

experience I am in a unique, and exceptionally strong position to write something unique and useful to the situation.

The Tibetan people have been viciously oppressed since the Chinese announced their intentions of “liberating” Tibet on October 25th 1950. While the Chinese Communist Party’s policies have, at times, been more relaxed; the thumb of the Communist Party is an ever-present force in the lives of the Tibetan people. The religious oppression and lack of political autonomy is the core of the discontentedness of the Tibetan people. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how China oppresses religion in Tibet through oppressive social and political policies. I will quantify how much religious freedom the Tibetan people have in different aspects of their lives, both personal and public, by drawing on scholarly research from many different time periods as well as my own first hand research. An important method I employ is examining how China’s policies have changed over time. Many scholars overlook this and it is important to consider due to the often duplicitous and self serving nature of the CCP. I will examine the reasons both the Chinese government and Tibetan people give for the current state of affairs on the Tibetan Plateau. Understanding both sides’ motivations, goals, and interpretations of common is imperative to move forward and find lasting, mutual beneficial solutions.

I examine in what four or five ways have the Tibetan People’s Buddhist heritage affected their relationship with the CCP and their pursuit of greater autonomy and religious freedom. The Tibetan People have drawn on their Buddhist heritage and religious views, specifically the political application of the “Middle Way,” (a Buddhist ideology that calls for compromise and moderation), to gain greater autonomy and exercise a greater degree of religious freedom by taking advantage of the small compromises that the Chinese

government has allowed the Tibetan people. Specifically, the impact of their Buddhist heritage in their resistance can be seen through the historical role of religion in Tibet, the role modern institutions play in Communist oppression, the Dali Lama's relationship with the international community and his advocating of non-violence, and the Communist party's policy pertaining to religion. The CCP isn't trying to eradicate religion, though they would be willing to do it; they want to ensure long-term political stability in western China.

Stereotypes and Myths

A common misconception that since the CCP has allowed religion in China the Tibetan people have enjoyed increased religious freedom. The Chinese government still outlawed all "superstition," allowing them to continue to restrict the Tibetan peoples' religious freedom with impunity under the guise of tolerance. It is still illegal to own a picture of the Dali Lama. Many people, including almost every citizen in China, believe that with increased economic prosperity in Tibet they will begin to tolerate, even appreciate, the Chinese occupation. However, most of the newfound wealth in Tibet lies in the hands of Han Chinese immigrants, not Tibetans. A lot of the new prosperity came at the expense of introducing aggressive policies such as work plans that exploited the vast natural resources in Tibet and the systematic dismantling of the monastic structure. China has gone about their mining and deforestation in a way that many Tibetans feel to be viscerally offensive. It directly goes against the tenants of Buddhism.

I also wish to challenge the view that the Chinese Communist Party has no justification to arrest monks and persecute monasteries. Monks and monasteries lie at the heart of Tibetan society and culture so it is the monks' responsibility to organize and voice the opinions of the Tibetan people. Monks often play a large part in what the Chinese

consider “anti-communist” or “un-patriotic” actions and monasteries are seen as revolutionary hotbeds. The Chinese government is not only attacking monasteries to dismantle the Tibetan religious way of life, which many scholars believe. They also believe they are ending anti-Chinese sentiment.

Many scholars take the CCP’s doctrine and policy decisions as hard laws and unbendable policies. This is untrue. The promises and policies set forth by the CCP are only followed as far as they are useful to the party and the direction the current administration wants to take the country. With changes in leadership old guarantees are often abandoned. It is impossible to analyze Sino-Tibetan relations without taking this into consideration.

Sources and Methods

I used a variety of sources such as personal accounts, interviews, scholarly articles, books, and political briefings, to support my thesis. While I don’t agree with all the authors and scholars referenced in this thesis, I have drawn on insights from their work to insure that I give a fair-minded presentation of Sino-Tibetan relations.

I interviewed four people on the record. Because of the sensitive political climate I will not give out the names of the people who I have interviewed off the record, but I have let our conversations affect my interpretation of the subject. I interviewed two of the heads of Machik, Tibetans who have grown up in exile, and two administrators/teachers at the summer program, Tibetans living out of Tibet. This is a religious studies thesis that also borrows from methodological and theoretical insights from history and political science. These include the idea of a civil religion, the historical clash and marriage between religion and the state, and Communist Party doctrine on religion.

Gouguang Wu, the author of *Muddling Through Crises*, states that in 2009 China was hit by various crises, such as an economic slowdown, social unrest, ethnic conflict, and political challenges from dissidents. He argues that the real reason for the dramatic increase in social unrest was that sources that China draws its legitimacy from, its unified society and economic prosperity, were coming under attack. Because of the economic slowdown, the Chinese people were no longer contented; they became acutely aware of the social problems because the veil of economic prosperity was lifted. He bases this assumption on the economic slowdown in the first quarter of 2009, which led to decreasing growth rates of residents' income, and how the government responds to unhappy minority groups. Gouguang Wu's idea that the China's social unrest, much of which is in minority areas such as Tibet, is being caused by their over aggressive economic policies plays into my thesis well. This is an area where the Middle Way and compromise can be used to benefit both the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people.

Michael C. Davis argues in *Establishing a Workable Autonomy in Tibet* that a change in China's policy towards Tibet is needs to happen for China to conform to its national and international obligations. China is already a superpower and will have to end its human rights abuses and shameless subjugation if they wish to continue to enjoy their newfound power and respect, abroad and domestically. He examines three different deliberate approaches to democracy that stress the capacity, right, and opportunity of ordinary citizens to participate in public deliberation. The author claims this is important because it promotes mutual trust and understandings. This article is beneficial to my thesis because my research confirms that thorough mutual dialogue trust can be increased and the Chinese government can be convinced to make small concessions. The interviews in

conducted indicate that if both sides can get together in a room, even if a solution isn't reached they will understand each other better. The state of Sino-Tibetan relations are still in a state of mistrust from both sides. The mistrust Michael C. Davis puts too much emphasis on the potential for deliberate democracy because the Chinese Government is very resistant to even meeting with Tibetan officials; they feel no need to hold up their national and international obligations concerning Tibet.

Jiann Hsieh's discusses the state of China's minorities in his paper *China's Nationalities Policy: Its Development and Problem*. His work is relevant to my thesis because his analysis of the CCP's policy towards minorities is thorough and recent. I compare how the Tibetan people are being treated in comparison to other minorities as a whole. Hsieh states that his purpose is fourfold: he describes the origins of the CCP, he summarizes the history of the CCP's nationalities policy, he discusses the present nationalities policy and its problems, and to assess the effects of the PRC's nationalities on the CCP's future. Hsieh explains how the Chinese government has attempted to co-opt religion in China. While I find Hsieh's paper to be very strong he believes that the Chinese government's religious policy is essentially to dissuade and oppress religion, I disagree. I believe at the core of the CCP's policies are the need to maintain power in whatever ways are necessary. The Chinese leadership has always proven to do what ever is in their own pragmatic self-interest. If supporting religion would promote the CCP, they would adjust their policies accordingly.

Elliot Sperling's essay, *Orientalism and Aspects of Violence in the Tibetan Tradition*, argues that the idea that the Tibetan Lamas preach nonviolence all the time is a "fanciful image of Tibet and is contradictory to its historical record;" the western perception of Tibet

as only a place of peace and spirituality is a recent construct. According to Sperling, the Dalai Lamas have a history of violence, demonstrated by the Fifth Dalai Lama. This is beneficial to my thesis because it demonstrates how the Dalai Lama's current course of action is a conscious choice, not him simply following historical precedent. The Dalai Lama is choosing to follow the Middle Way in political discourse and he is an instrumental part of the recent trend to try and find compromise with the Chinese Communist Party. Also, the historical role of the Dalai Lama is far more political than most people assume. I will use this essay to challenge the notion that the Dalai Lama is a purely spiritual leader.

Navel of the Demoness, by Charles Rambel, examines how institutions, particularly institutions that mix politics and religion, maintain their persuasiveness in their communities. The book states that civil religion is sanctified in the society in which it functions through integration, legitimating (transmitting the sense of an inherent justness of rightness in the nature of the social order and in the goals pursued by the society), and mobilization (galvanizing the efforts of society's members on behalf of socially approved tasks and responsibilities). The author focuses his inquiry on a village of forty-eight households and about three hundred people in Nepal's Mustang District. The community seemed, to the author, like an ideal place to examine the interaction of Buddhism and paganism and how it relates to civil religion. Charles Rambel claims "it is possible to talk about Tibetan Buddhism independently of the lives of Tibetan Buddhist villagers," which I disagree with. While Tibetan Buddhism can be practiced outside of Tibet, many of the holy places and important monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism are located in Tibet; therefore, even if you are studying Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet, it is irresponsible to not consider the state of religion in Tibet. I will use the categories presented to analyze the

case study in the book to examine how Tibetan Buddhism operates as a civil religion. This book supports my claim that Tibetan Buddhism and the political structure in Tibet are intrinsically intertwined. Also, this book supports my claim that the Tibetan people did have a legitimate government, further demonstrating the purposeful aggression of the Chinese Communist Party.

Robert Barnett argues in *Cutting Off the Serpent's Head*, that political dissent in Tibet is spreading to rural area and wider sections of the community. This caused by the highly repressive policies brought about by the Third Work Forum. This in turn lead to an increase in arrests, implementation of several repressive policies that curtailed the spread of religious activity, and covert operations that limited the Tibetan people's ability to live without duress. The strong factual basis for the claims in the book makes it a very valuable resource. All of his statements are followed up by reliable data presented clearly. I will use this book to prove that the Chinese Communist Party has lead a direct, and intentional, policy of religious oppression. It is important to understand that even if the Chinese Communist Party claims it will allow something, such as protests that address certain issues, such as rising grain prices, they will, and can, quickly crack down with impunity. They act first, and then give justifications. Without understanding the duplicitous and brutal attitude of the Chinese leadership when it comes to Tibet it is impossible to understand how to go forward to increase political autonomy and religious freedom. Also, I will use this book to highlight the dire situation of the Tibetan people and how even small concessions found through the political application of the Middle Way are important.

Roy Burman's *Religion and Politics in Tibet* argues that religion and politics in Tibet are intrinsically intertwined in Tibet and the lack of political autonomy has caused religious

oppression. He states this because of the Chinese's selection of religious figureheads and the Chinese justification of invasion. I use this book to show how the Chinese government's political oppression has affected religious freedom. However, I will argue that a large reason the Chinese Communist Party invaded Tibet was to dismantle the "feudal society" in Tibet. This gave them a greater justification to dismantle religious infrastructure, which supported with the social hierarchy. This book does not give enough credit to this theory.

Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era is a report published by Tashi Rabgey and Tseten Wangchuk Sharlho. They state that there weren't opportunities for negotiations that were missed in the 80s, even when Beijing appeared most inclined to enter into dialogue, the gap between the parties was too wide for meaningful engagement. They base this assertion on the fact that there were opportunities to talk about the Chinese government was not engaged in the dialogue, the negative reaction to "liberalism" during this time, and the easing of international pressures. I use this book to support my claims that the surrounding conditions have to be right for the Chinese government to make concessions to the Tibetan people. This is beneficial to my thesis because it explains the political motivations behind the Chinese Communist Party and explains how to bridge the gap between the Chinese Communist Party and the Tibetan people.

Thomas Herber's essay, *Old Tibet A Hell on Earth*, states the depiction Tibetans in Chinese art and official propaganda reflects the Chinese stereotype that Tibetans are alien and backwards and this legitimizes their right to rule. According to Herbert, the Han Chinese view minorities as barbarians, which implies it is ok to subjugate them because they can't rule over themselves. Also, they are over sexualized in Chinese art, which leads the Han Chinese to believe they are deviants, and the harsh way Tibetans are presented in

Chinese propaganda. This paper will be beneficial to my thesis because it explains how the Chinese Communist Party demonizes the Dali Lama. Chinese propaganda portrays Tibetan Buddhism as superstition, which is illegal in China, and not religion, which is legal. I agree with Herber's assessments whole-heartedly. My experiences in China, both while growing up in Shanghai and traveling abroad, confirm this. Chinese propaganda has a huge impact on the way Chinese people think and view Tibetans.

Wolfgang von Erffa's book, *Uncompromising Tibet*, examines whether the strength of Buddhist religious belief and claims that the "spirit of liberty" in Tibet is too strong for the Chinese government to overcome. I agree with this for several reasons. The Buddhist idea of reincarnation, for example, helps them preserve and keep hope alive because they believe that if they don't gain more freedom in this life, who knows that the next will hold? Von Erffa believes the spirit of the Tibetan people is a triumph. It has given them the strength to continue their non-violent struggle for liberty. The historical precedent set by the fall of the Soviet Union and the increase in nationalism in Tibet are also important factors in Sino-Tibetan relations according to von Erffa. This book is beneficial to my thesis because I agree that the only way to overcome the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet is through non-violent struggle. Also, his account of Tibetan spirituality is politically relevant and recent. Because of the quickly changing landscape of Sino-Tibetan relations, older texts have to be read within their historical context. The protests that led to the crackdown in 2008, for example, drastically changed the state of the Tibetan people. While the book is very useful, it is a first hand account and includes a lot of the author's own opinions. These opinions come from a position of authority, but still need to be cross-referenced.

Chapter Breakdown

My first chapter will give an alternative history of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibet's historical relationship to China its effects on Sino-Tibetan relationship. I will explain both Tibet and China's claims to sovereignty of Tibet and explain the invasion from both perspectives. I also will discuss the historical role the Dalai Lamas have played, including their violent acts. This chapter will provide the historical background for my thesis.

The second chapter will discuss the Communist Party's religious policy. To understand how China is oppressing the Tibetan people one must understand the infrastructure in place that justifies their actions. The CCP has co-opted several different religions in China to exercise more power over them. They have thrust themselves into many different areas of Tibetan Buddhism, dismantling the religious and political infrastructure of Tibet in order to better subjugate the Tibetan people. There have been several shifts in doctrine over the years and the Tibetan people and the Tibetan government in exile has waited until the CCP's religious policies were favorable before asserting themselves.

My third chapter will discuss how Buddhist institutions and figureheads are sources of resistance for the Tibetan people. Most of the resistance, protests, rallies, etc., originated from monks and monasteries. The Chinese government has recognized this and in the past 30 years there has been increasing brutality and arrests of religious figureheads. Also, monasteries have been almost completely taken over by the occupying government. Buddhist institutions and figureheads are leaders in the struggle for political autonomy and religious freedom that make them very dangerous to the Chinese government. I explain how the Buddhist leaders organize resistance and how the Chinese government justifies their brutal actions.

The fourth chapter deals with the Dali Lama's role in Sino-Tibetan relations. The Dali Lama is an advocate for the Middle Way. He encourages Tibetans to not rush into violent confrontations and to wait for favorable conditions before acting rashly. He is one of the only people who can rally the entire nation of Tibetans to action; he is the most revered political, social, and religious leader of the Tibetan people. This has caused him to be the center of the CCP's propaganda campaign and oppressive policies.

The fifth chapter is a detailed examination of the Middle Way and its application in Tibet. It is the cornerstone of many progressive human rights advocates because it realizes that the Chinese government has subjugated and infiltrated Tibetan society to a point where it is unrecognizable to what it was 50 years ago. I examine how to move forward and what has been working for Tibet in their quest for greater freedom and autonomy. The Tibetan People need to go forward and find small concessions that will directly improve the lives of the Tibetan people; the Chinese government will never allow broad, sweeping reforms. The Middle Way is pragmatic, fruitful, and works.

Chapter One: A History of the Sino-Tibetan Relationship

The current state of Sino-Tibetan relations go beyond the Communist invasion of the 1950s. There are historical forces at work that are hundreds of years old. In order to fully understand modern Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and its relationship with the Communist party, one must understand the cultural, social, and political relationship between these two nations. The history of Tibet explains why both Tibet and China claim sovereignty in Tibet. Also Tibet's history demonstrates how the Tibetan people had their own unique form government: they blended civil religion with a loose political hierarchy. Finally Tibet's history can help explain how the Chinese justified their invasion and subsequent oppression of the Tibetan people.

The Tibetan plateau became a vassal state of the Mongols under Ghengis Khan in the 13th century, but this was not Tibet's first contact with China.¹ The Chinese who attacked and captured Lhasa had invaded Tibet in 650 A.D. Also, Tibet had invaded China and taken the Chinese capital of Xian in the 8th century. The Tibetan King abandoned his conquests and relinquished much of his lands back to the Chinese after a period of time; they were not important to Tibet. These initial conflicts are not cited in the discourse between Tibet and China. China does not believe that they are pertinent to the current discussion, but Tibet did have the upper hand in their relationship in the past.

During the 9th century there was much contact between both powers; they sent approximately 100 missions back and forth between them.² China and Tibet shared a mutually beneficial relationship that was described as "the nephew and the maternal

¹ Patterson, George N. "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt." *The China Quarterly* 1 (1960): 87. Jstor.org. Web. Nov. 2011.

² *Ibid.*

uncle,” according to inscribed stone pillars in Lhasa that commemorate the relationship between Ti-Song De-tsen, King of Tibet and Hwang-Ti, Emperor of China.³ The Chinese communist party is very aware they Tibet is their nephew and they believe they have an obligation to protect and take care of it. They tend to forget the second part of the inscription that emphasizes both parties agreement to respect the “sacred... old relationship and the happiness of their neighbors. During this time the relationship between China and Tibet was one of respect and recognition of each other’s sovereignty.

Shortly after the Mongol invasion of Tibet, Ghengis Khan was visited by the Tibetan priest, Phagspa. Phagspa was so popular that Kublai Khan appointed him to the rank of “priest-king” of Tibet.”⁴ Phagspa and Kublai Khan’s relationship was “Cho-Yon,” which means “Priest-Patron.”⁵ This special relationship embodies the duality of secular and spiritual rule; both the priest and the patron are dependant on each other. This relationship gave the Khan spiritual authority over his subjects. Eventually the Khan saw fit to give a religious leader the control over secular society in Tibet. The Chinese government blessed the priest-leader duality.

Phagspa was recognized at the highest authority in Tibet of both religion and politics.⁶ The existing political structure in Tibet made electing Phagspa as the political leader as well as the religious leader a very bold move. This allowed Tibet to maintain their existing political infrastructure and preserve their culture, as it existed before. It also severed to centralize the Tibetan government. When the Great Fifth Dalai Lama visited Peking at the invitation of the Emperor of the Manchu dynasty in the 17th century, the

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Erffa, Wolfgang Von. *Uncompromising Tibet: Culture, Religion, Politics.* New Delhi: Paljor Publications, 1996. Print.

⁶ Burman, Bina Roy. *Religion and Politics in Tibet.* New Delhi: Vikas, 1979. Print.

Emperor treated the Dalai Lama as leader of a sovereign nation.⁷ This idea of a religious and political leader was still recognized by the Chinese government.

The Dalai Lama emerged as both the political and religious leader of Tibet in the latter part of the fourteenth century as the Ge-Luk-Pa sect, “Yellow-Hats,” rose to power.⁸ The Ge-Luk-Pa sect continued to consolidate their power until the fifth Dalai Lama asked the Ocelots Mongols to help them subdue the other sects in 1641.⁹ This was a mutually beneficial move for both the Mongols and the Ge-Luk-Pa sect because the Mongols were trying to maintain the religious bond between Tibet and China and the Dalai Lama to emerged as the eminent political and religious leader of Tibet. This is a key moment in the establishment of modern day Tibet. The Dalai Lama has remained the supreme leader of Tibet in the eyes of the Tibetan people since this day.

After the death of the sixth Dalai Lama, the Chinese emperor sent three armies into Tibet that were eventually successful in defeating the Mongols, who were the ruling imperial power. The Mongols treated the Tibetans with great respect and mutual understanding. The relationship between Mongolia and Tibet was strengthened by their similar nomadic cultures and their shared religion. China shared fewer characteristics with Tibet and operated with much more impunity; they didn’t treat the Tibetans with the same level of respect that the Mongolian did. China’s claim to suzerainty over Tibet begins from this invasion. China believed that they were fulfilling their historical role of “uncle” to the Tibetan people, when in reality it was far less innocent. Almost immediately after their invasion they began to disrupt the Tibet’s civil religion. The Manchu government instituted

⁷ Patterson, George N. "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt." *The China Quarterly* 1 (1960): 87. *Jstor.org*. Web. Nov. 2011.

⁸ Burman, Bina Roy. *Religion and Politics in Tibet*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1979. Print.

⁹ *Ibid.*

two “Ambans,” ministers who were required to approve all decisions of the central government. The Dalai Lama was still recognized as the ruler of the Central Tibetan area surrounding Lhasa, but the Chinese appointed a Dalai Lama of their choice in 1717 and took away all control of Tibet’s eastern provinces, Amdo and Kham.¹⁰

The Chinese Power in Tibet was consolidated through a civil war in 1706 fought over the removal of the 6th Dalai Lama.¹¹ They drove out all remaining Mongols from Tibet and eventually, through infighting between Tibetan factions and the Chinese occupying forces and Ambans, the Ambans emerged more powerful than they ever had been.

In 1779 the Panchen Lama, the second most important person in Tibetan Buddhism, visited the Manchu Emperor and signed the Peking-Tashillunpo contract that created dissension between the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama.¹² The contract aligned the Panchen Lama with the Chinese and created a schism in Tibetan Buddhism. The Chinese knew an effective way to undermine the power of the Dalai Lama was through the manipulation of the Panchen Lama. The Chinese also proceeded to strip the Dalai Lama of all temporal authority and place the supreme political power in the hands of the Chinese controlled regent.

In 1751 and 1792 the Manchu emperor instituted a series of reforms that diminished the power of various Tibetan leaders and institutions.¹³ According to Ippolito Desideri, an Italian missionary who was in Tibet during this time, many of the officials held positions that were hereditary and operated as “territorial chiefs.”¹⁴ The Chinese

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

bureaucratized the Tibetan officials and nobility by creating a new system of government that permitted the local Tibetan officials to maintain control over the local government, but the Chinese Amban supervised all activity. This new bureaucracy marginalized the Tibetan political structure. The Chinese government established a system of indirect rule that gave them final say in all Tibetan affairs. The bureaucratization also stripped the nobility of a significant portion their power by separating the political functions from their landed estates.¹⁵ The Chinese bureaucracy could now operate with more impunity; they instituted a country census and a revised taxation system so they controlled the economy as well as the government. The Tibetans were also forbidden to have direct relations with other countries except through Ambans. Up until this point Tibet had enjoyed very close relationships with Nepal, India, and Mongolia. These countries played an important part in the evolution of Tibet's civil religion. These countries were all Buddhist and incorporated religion into their respective governments. With the new Chinese policies the cultural and religious discourse was restricted to a trickle.

China continued to rule Tibet until the last Chinese dynasty collapsed. After the fall of the Qing dynasty there was fighting in and around Lhasa. The Tibetan forces, under the leadership of the XIII Dalai Lama, eventually were successful in repelling the Chinese forces. In 1912, the Chinese President, Yuan Shi-Kai, ordered Chinese troops back to China.¹⁶ The XIII Dalai Lama proceeded to send the Chinese government a telegram that stated, "he himself was now going to exercise both secular and spiritual power in Tibet."¹⁷ This formally ended the Cho-Yon relationship between China and Tibet because China had

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Erffa, Wolfgang Von. *Uncompromising Tibet: Culture, Religion, Politics*. New Delhi: Paljor Publications, 1996. Print.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

violated her obligations in their relationship to act as a protectorate. This was the movement Tibet claimed freedom. The Tibetan people supported the Dalai Lama's assertion of political and religious sovereignty. They were allowed to exist independent, and generally unmolested by the Chinese, until the Communist invasion of 1951.

Tibet's Political and Religious Structure

Tibet's political and religious structures are inherently intertwined. Religion has always exerted great influence on Tibetan society and the civil religion. Tibetan Buddhism is at the core of Tibetan culture, morals, and their ideology. When the Chinese began to oppress the Tibetan people's religious freedom they were, in essence, oppressing the Tibetan people's entire way of life. They are two sides to the same coin; it is extremely rare to find a Tibetan who believes that a secular leader is fit to lead Tibet. My research conducted in western China in 2011 confirms this idea. A good Tibetan leader is one who is Buddhist and brings Buddhist teaching and ideas into his politics. My subjects had a difficult time even conceptualizing a secular leader of their country. Despite the Dalai Lama's exile, they still view him as the head of ethereal and spiritual affairs.

The Tibetan people's concept of religion and politics is called "Cho-si-nyi-dan." The term describes the need for the leadership of Tibet to encapsulate the duality of being both the head of the established religion and the head of the established political authority.¹⁸ The Tibetan people place both their temporal happiness and spiritual wellbeing in the hands of their leadership. There was a duality that prevailed in almost all organs of Tibetan government. There were two separate offices of government for almost all areas of

¹⁸ Wangyal, Phuntsog. "The Influence of Religion on Tibetan Politics." *The Tibet Journal* 1.1 (1975). Print.

government, lay and ecclesiastical.¹⁹ The dual leaders would work together very closely, respecting each other's opinions and orders.

The Ka-Shag was the highest office in the administrative body in Tibet. Their role was to appoint or dismiss officials to various organizations in Tibet. The Ka-shag had power over the internal administration of the country, and matters relation to politics, finance, and the courts. Even while this organization dealt with secular matters, the Dalai Lama could appoint monks to the Ka-Shag. Tibet was divided into fifty-three districts and two officials, a layman and a priest, oversaw each of these districts.²⁰ While Tibet did have many laypeople in its governmental structure in positions of relative power, the Dalai Lama was unquestionably the head of the government.

The Dalai Lama was the head of both the sacred and secular in Tibet. Even when the Dalai Lama was too young to rule, the head of the government was always a monk.²¹ The Dalai Lama is not a hereditary position, but each Dalai Lama is believed to be a reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. They all have the same spirit. The Tibetan people believe that the Dalai Lama is inherently infallible and while there has been political strife and even civil war fought over who is the rightful Dalai Lama, he still exists as the leader of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan people. The western perception of the Dalai Lama is skewed; the Dalai Lama is not only responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of Tibetans, he is also responsible for their national safety.

Past Dalai Lamas have started wars and led armies in the past. In the mid 19th century Tibet invaded the Sikhs and the Nepalese with "no involvement from China." The

¹⁹ *Burman, Bina Roy. Religion and Politics in Tibet. New Delhi: Vikas, 1979. Print.*

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

Nepalese were even forced to pay tribute to Tibet for many years.²² The Dalai Lama in modern western society is often portrayed as a benevolent monk, but in the past the Dalai Lamas have acted much differently. Dalai Lamas have sent many armies to fight against the Chinese, the most recent example occurring in 1960.²³ This is one of many reasons the Chinese are so wary about the Dalai Lama's role in modern Tibet. China's leader is the head of their government, communist party (a religious placeholder), and their military. The Dalai Lama holds these same positions.

The title lama is given to many high-ranking monks in Tibet. These lamas were very important to Tibetan culture and society. Because of the loose governmental structure of Tibet there wasn't always a court system to settle disputes and lamas would step in as legal intermediaries. They commanded great respect in their communities and oversaw monasteries that could house over a thousand monks. The most important Lama in Tibet, besides the Dalai Lama, is the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama is considered the second most important person in Tibetan Buddhism. The Chinese have used the Panchen Lama to legitimize their regime in Tibet in several different ways that will be explained later. The Panchen Lama is a very useful tool to use to attack the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama because they both are spiritual, and therefore cultural, leaders of Tibet.

The monasteries' of Tibet were, and still are, some of the most important institutions in Tibet. They are the guardians of culture and religion, education centers, and social institutions. In the 19th century there was around 2500 monasteries and 760,000

22 Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

23 Patterson, George N. "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt." *The China Quarterly* 1 (1960): 87. *Jstor.org*. Web. Nov. 2011.

monks, one fifth of the population.²⁴ Before 1951 the monasteries could own large estates and land holdings. They were also exempt from paying taxes on these estates and the goods they produced. This gave them a much higher income than nobles, as nobles had to pay taxes on their estates. According to Sir Charles Bell, a tibetologist who visited Tibet in 1920, the income of the monastic estates taken together was higher than the income of the Lhasa government. These monasteries were centers of education, culture, political discourse, and power until the Chinese dismantled monastic society.²⁵ The Chinese systematically and deliberately oppressed the monastic system in Tibet because the monasteries were so powerful. In later years monasteries and monks have become the centers of organized political dissent and protest. This, in turn, has led to vicious, violent oppression. This chapter helps to demonstrate that Melvin Goldstein's idea that greater economic prosperity will bring about greater happiness and freedom to the Tibetan people. They have never leveraged their wealth in a politically advantageous way.

The lay society was a stratified society that placed a lot of the power in the hands of the nobility. The nobility's power had been on the decline for a long time when the Chinese invaded, but they still held significant power in Tibet. The nobility earned their money by being official sin the government, as estate holders, and as traders. The peasantry provided for the labor for the land. There were two types of peasantry: there were the "ordinary ... serfs" who were regular tax-paying peasants holding land from the state, or there were "dependant peasants who worked for the first type and rented land from them."²⁶ Both classes of peasants had to pay tribute to the nobility and cultivate their lands. When China

²⁴ *Burman, Bina Roy. Religion and Politics in Tibet. New Delhi: Vikas, 1979. Print.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

justified the “liberating” Tibet from oppressive forces they considered the feudal society an example of an “oppressive force.” The Chinese Communist Party could not accept having a section of communist controlled territory under feudal, capitalist control.

China’s Slow Invasion

The Chinese have always had their eye on Tibet. Tibet has played an important role in China’s history. Tibet has helped developed China’s religious history, it was important buffer zone between Nepal and India and China when relations were strained, and in recent years huge amounts of resources have been found on the Tibetan plateau. While their involvement and interest in Tibet has waxed and waned with their power, China remains confident that Tibet always has been, and always will be, a part of China. There are treaties, correspondences, and historical evidence that suggest that Tibet has been treated as an independent nation, despite China’s confidence. Tibetans’ opinion of China’s role in Tibet has varied with the times, but they have asserted their independence and sovereignty at every opportunity. The Chinese view Tibet as a rebellious child: they are ungrateful for all China has brought to them and they are unfit to govern themselves.

China’s claims to Tibet began in 1717 with the Qing invasion. Tibet lost the eastern provinces of Amdo and Kham, but the Dalai Lama was still allowed to rule the country. Soon after the Chinese invasion the Chinese instituted a series of reforms that placed Chinese Ambans to oversee the Tibetan government.²⁷ The Qing emperor was not interested in administratively absorbing Tibet into China; his main focus was to control the

²⁷ Patterson, George N. "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt." *The China Quarterly* 1 (1960): 87. *Jstor.org*. Web. Nov. 2011.

leaders of Tibet to prevent them from joining the Mongolians to disturb Qing interests.²⁸
The Qing decided to create a king of protectorate over Tibet to enforce its own interests.

Soon after the Ambans arrived the Qing made a series of changes that solidified their position in Tibet. They established a permanent military garrison in Lhasa to solidify their new dominance in Tibet. They also installed their own seventh Dalai Lama and murdered the current regent. Following these reforms the Tibetan people attempted to rebel, but were put down. Eventually compromise was found under the capable leadership of Pholhanas, a Tibetan minister. Pholhanas “made all the decisions in Tibet, the Amban being consulted merely regarding their implementation.”²⁹ This is the sort of involvement the Tibetan people began to become accustomed to, the Chinese exerted symbolic power, but the Tibetan people were allowed to operate with political sovereignty and religious freedom. They did look to China for military help, such as in 1792 to help push the Nepalese out.³⁰

Though Chinese control of Tibet waxed and waned over the years, they almost always favored indirect rule, the Tibetans had their own governing structure. After the fall of the Qing dynasty the Chinese involvement Tibet was minimal. Both the Kuomintang and the Communist party had contact with Tibet but the status of Tibet was unclear. The Communist invasion of Tibet in 1951 set an unprecedented level of involvement by the Chinese and the Tibetans were unprepared for the level of oppression that came with Communist rule.

²⁸ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter Two: The State of Religion in China

“Even when both sides have a common interest in preventing a disaster, emotion and issues of “face”—political pride—easily derail them and marginalize reason.”—Melvyn Goldstein.³¹

To understand the current state of Sino-Tibetan relations one must understand the status of religion in China and how the Chinese Communist Party has treated religion in the past and how those actions have shaped their current policies. Official Communist doctrine states “religion is an opiate which poisons the people” and that a Communist nation must “struggle against religion. China has taken a more pragmatic approach to religion since 1949. While they have been more pragmatic than one may expect at times, control is always at the core of their policies; China is aware of the power that religion wields and that it can challenge the legitimacy of their regime.

The Chinese Communist Party’s view of religion vastly differs from the views of Western States. Even during times of tolerance the Communist government still believed that religion is a waste of time, space, and resources. At the core of the CCP’s anti-religious doctrine is the belief that “the communist regard the ideology of Communism as a competitive alternative to religious beliefs, and vice versa”³². There is a reverence for Communist ideology and Communist figureheads in China that is similar to how religious deities are worshiped. Yang writes, “Within Marxist movements, and under Marxist-Lennist regimes, many devoted party activists and some average citizens accepted Marxian teaching as if they were a religious body of sacred precepts Marxism, as a code of personal and group practices, satisfied emotional

³¹ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

³² Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

needs, provided transcendental guidance, and defined ethical ends”³³. Communist doctrine claims that Communism is the “loftiest idea and noblest belief.” Religion challenges this idea. Though almost all religions in China are oppressed to a certain degree Tibetan Buddhism is a unique case because it couples religious ideology and political infrastructure, that challenges the CCP’s legitimacy in Tibet.

Fenggang Yang, states in his book, *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*, that there are three types of atheism that exist in China: Militant atheism, enlightenment atheism, and mild atheism. This classification system is useful because it acknowledges the differences within the political system and discourse. Enlightenment atheism states that religion gives people an illusory or false consciousness. It advocates a decline in religious doctrine through scientific education and atheist propaganda. Militant atheism views religion as a dangerous opium that exploits the classes and is antirevolutionary. Mild atheism sees the social and epistemological roots and recognizes the religious effects in human history. It espouses the idea that the alienation natural and social forces that oppress people should be gradually eliminated through social reforms.

Analyzing China’s views on religion is made more difficult by the fact that the CCP’s stated goals and actual goals can be very different. For the Tibetan people to gain more religious freedom the CCP’s goals have to be understood, as well. China is concerned with maintain its power in Tibet and wants to gain actual legitimacy.

Mao Zedong began enacting religious reform immediately after he took power. Though he was encroaching on the people’s religious freedom, his policies concerning religion were typically pragmatic; he often had other goals, beyond destroying religion, which he was trying to

³³ Ibid.

achieve through his new policies. He was trying to unify a country with millions of minority citizens under a new system of government that required a complete restructuring of social relations.

When Mao founded the Religious Affairs Department its main purpose was to drive “out the foreign missionaries, pressing Catholics and Protestants to cut off ties completely with foreign countries”.³⁴ His focus was on driving out foreign influences from the new Communist state. Mao was very concerned with foreign influence in China. Religion was an outside, foreign influence according to Mao. He believed that outside influences and forces would impede his political efforts. By dismantling the religious systems in place, and replacing them with his own political systems, he could co-opt religious practices and more closely monitor these groups and get rid of the outside influences all at once.

Mao, at times, showed respect for the various minority groups in China and recognized their differences from Han Chinese. He “emphasized practice and often said that working among the [different] nationalities must be accomplished in the light of the real conditions of minority areas.”³⁵ He recognized that he could not totally subjugate the minority peoples of China. He wanted to find a middle ground where he could gain their trust and loyalty. Still, his true intentions are hard to extrapolate. Mao did show times of understanding and tolerance, but as he consolidated his power in China he began to crack down on political dissidents within Chinese society.

The 17 Point Agreement, also known as the 17 Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, was forced upon the Tibetan people in 1951. The Chinese forces had

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Hsieh, Jian. "China's Nationalities Policy: Its Developmental Problems." *Anthropos*(1986): 1-20. Print.

already defeated the Tibetan army, they were not peaceful nor did Tibet need to be liberated, and insisted that Tibet send a delegation to Beijing to negotiate Tibet's liberation.

The treaty guaranteed religious beliefs for the Tibetan people. It stated:

The policy of freedom of religious beliefs... shall be carried out.

The religious beliefs, customs, and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected and lama monasteries shall be protected.

The central authorities will not effect a change in income of the monasteries.³⁶

It did, however, outlaw superstitions. Superstitions, according to the Communist Party, impeded the progress of society. Unfortunately, this meant that any religious belief, practice, or religious organization the CCP didn't approve of could be labeled as superstition. They claimed that they allowed religious freedom and at the same time oppressed anything aspect of religion they wanted, which turned out to be a lot. China's religious policy is represented by this dichotomy. Jiann Hseih states that the CCP's policy towards religion is to "provide freedom to believe in religion and also freedom not to believe in religion; it demotes rather than promotes it." I think that this is far too sympathetic towards China. He is correct, they do allow religion but they do more than simply demote religion; the CCP, beginning with Mao, has believed religion was not important to creating an ideal society, therefore making it inherently worthless and wasteful. This is not to say that they were unsympathetic to minorities and certain aspects of their religious beliefs.

³⁶ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

The gap between the Tibetan's leadership and the CCP's demands was too large when Mao took power so they could not reach any compromises. Mao was concerned with Tibet's international status. Tibet had operated as if it were an independent state when dealing with Britain, India, and the United States. There had existed a political double standard that gave the international forces Mao had expunged from China access to the country. Tibet was different from other minority areas because in other areas Han Chinese had lived there for thousands of years; no Han lived in Tibet. Mao had to undergo a unique strategy to politically subjugate Tibet.

Mao knew that military action wouldn't be enough. According to Melvyn Goldstein, "Mao Zedong an excellent sense of history and understood clearly that Tibet had an international status that set it part from every other nationally group in China." He goes on to say, "Mao did not want to simply conquer Tibet, even though it would have been easy to do so. He wanted a political settlement approved by Tibet's leader, the Dalai Lama. He wanted China's claim to Tibet legitimized by having the Dalai Lama accept Chinese sovereignty and work with the [People's Republic of China] gradually to reform Tibet's feudal economy." Within two weeks Tibet's armies had been neutralized. The Tibetan government's appeals to foreign powers had been ignored and they were forced to send a delegation to Beijing to negotiate in the spring of 1951. The delegation was forced to sign the "Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" on May 23.³⁷

The Seventeen Point Agreement became the CCP's official policy. The first point clearly states that: The Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the Motherland—the People's Republic of China. China emphasized inclusion as opposed to subjugation. This

³⁷ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

was also the first time that Tibet recognized Chinese sovereignty.³⁸ China agreed to keep the Dalai Lama and the political and economic systems until the Tibetans wanted reforms. According to the Agreement “the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the leadership of the Central People’s Government,” the central authorities would not alter the existing political system in Tibet, “The religious beliefs, customs, and habits of the Tibetan People shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected,” and that they would allow the local governments carry out the reforms in their own ways.³⁹ Mao had traded a devolved state for political legitimization and an agreement to modernize their economic and political structures.

While the Seventeen Point Agreement was their official policy the reality was very different. The Dalai Lama was in hiding and had not cleared any of the terms of the treaty. While the delegation ratified the treaty, the Dalai Lama feared that by admitting to Chinese sovereignty they would be unable to ever be independent again. This treaty also excluded the Tibetan peoples living in Sichuan, Qinghai, and Yunnan, so when social reform swept the country the Tibetan people were not protected under the Seventeen Point Agreement.⁴⁰ This caused bloody conflicts and a large amount of refugees to flee to the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

The language of the Seventeen Point Agreement is very vague. For example, in point three the Tibetan People’s right of leadership is asserted, but only under the “policy towards nationalities” which was subject to change. Whether this was an intentional move

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

or not, the fact of the matter is that the language was exploited for years until it became unnecessary for the Chinese to even provide a reason for their actions.

By 1957 the socialist transformation of the economy was complete so the government turned to reorganizing the Buddhist monastic structure in Tibet. While the Tibetan people had accepted economic reform, this attacked their very way of life, their culture. They believed that religious Lamas and monks were wasted manpower. The CCP stated, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his labor." The religious clergy were considered nothing more than parasites that contributed nothing but the poisonous opium of the people.⁴¹ There were 80,000 lamas who did not produce matter, nor produced people. The CCP believed that they had to engage in production, farming or industry to be a member of Communist society. This thought process demonstrates how the Chinese leadership fundamentally misunderstands the Tibetan People's religious beliefs. The Chinese made the lamas do physical labor, excluding them from the culture they represent.

Beginning with the Second Five Year Plan, Mao began to try and co-opt religion into the communist party.⁴² This "patriotic" religious organization became an integral part of controlling religious freedom in Tibet. The Three Selves Christian Church, a Christian organization that was run by the Chinese, was also created during this time. By the time the Cultural Revolution began frictions in Tibet were already high. The Tibetan people saw that the 17 Point Agreement had not been followed and unrest and distrust grew.

⁴¹ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

⁴² Ibid.

By 1959 tensions had reached a boiling point. The increasing number of refugees, religiously oppressive political reforms, and famine brought about by The Great Leap Forward sparked a revolution spurred on by the Panchen Lama's insistence that the lack of food production and decrease in animal husbandry was directly caused by the CCP's policies. The Tibet Information network has recently uncovered a secret report released in the early 60s. The report attributes mass starvation among Tibetans at the time to government directives, and, four years before the Cultural Revolution, expresses fears that Chinese policies were aimed at the eradication of religion and could lead to the elimination of Tibetans as a distinct people.⁴³ The CCP, under the guise of dismantling the feudal system in place, was attacking the Tibetan Buddhism, the source of their national identity.

The revolution was bloody and brutal. Though there were guerilla forces fighting with the aid of the CIA for up to fifteen years in certain areas of Tibet, the majority of the revolution was put down within weeks. The revolution was extremely detrimental to religious freedom in Tibet. The Dalai Lama had to escape across the boarder, as did many other high-ranking lamas, leaving the Tibetan central government in shambles. Monasteries and monks played a large role in the revolution; their involvement gave the CCP even more reason to oppress them and dismantle the religious infrastructure.

After the revolution Tibet entered a dark period. Mao's militant atheism quickly became apparent. The CCP seemed that it was no longer interested in co-opting Tibet into China. In the eyes of the CCP, Tibet had been given new infrastructure, modernization, and new "helpful" policies. They responded with a revolution. China now viewed Tibet as an unruly child that should be subjugated with a strong hand. The military occupation

⁴³ "Samsara: 1962 Panchen Lama Report." *S U B L I M I N a L . O R G*. Web. 07 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.subliminal.org/tibet/testimony/1962-panchen.html>>.

allowed the Communist Party to arrest countless numbers of political prisoners, many of who were lamas, monks, or other religious figures. Policy makers still believe this to be true to this day.

The goal of the Cultural Revolution was to break up conventional ideas under the four olds (old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits) and to purge the bourgeois' elements believed to be infecting society and the party itself. A vicious, paranoid, and violent movement that swept the country achieved this. Teachers were beaten to death, intellectuals vilified, and monks killed. Anything intellectual was seen as being counter revolutionary and was destroyed. The Red Guards were the vanguard of this movement. They were a violent group of brainwashed patriots who ransacked "traditional architecture, burn[ed] classic books and paintings, and shatter[ed] antiques."⁴⁴ Tibetan Buddhism was not only officially shut down, but Mao's Red Guard attempted destroyed all traces of Buddhism. Of Tibet's 6,259 monasteries that existed in 1951, only eight survived the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁵ Tibet was ravaged and by The Cultural Revolution fundamentally changed how the Han people viewed Tibet and Tibetans.

They saw all Chinese who didn't support their actions as against them; if you didn't appear to be caught up in the "patriotic fervor" you would be labeled as a counter revolutionist, or a bourgeois, and were subject to humiliation, physical harm, and forced labor. If you were considered to be a religious "believer" you would be forced to make

⁴⁴ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

⁴⁵ Govinda, Lama Anagarika. "Tibet - As It Was Before the Chinese Occupation." *Cosmic Harmony, the State of Enlightenment - Stories and Ancient Wisdom of Sages, Saints, Avatars*. Web. 07 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.cosmicharmony.com/Tibet/TibetBefore.htm>>.

“public renunciations.”⁴⁶ Today in China the vast majority of Han Chinese won't talk about the Cultural Revolution, especially those who lived through it. It was a time of fear and extremes; they look back upon it as some sort of patriotic dream turned a nightmare. Still the language used to describe religion, especially Tibetan Buddhism, is reminiscent of the language used in the revolution. The Red Guard was unable to destroy religion. Religion was only forced underground.

After the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution the 1975 Constitution kept the clause that confirmed religious freedom, but added an addendum that added the freedom of atheist propaganda. This was a token gesture; China's Constitution has never served as the basis of law under Communist rule.⁴⁷ Mao Tzedeng was at the head of the Cultural Revolution. The Revolution created the cult of personality surrounding him and he became an almost god like figure. Many people performed confession rituals in front of Mao's portrait or statue at the office or in their homes. There were daily rituals of readings Mao's books and extolling Mao at schools, factories, and farms.⁴⁸ After Mao's death in 1976 he was revered as an infallible saint.

Despite the dedication and passion of the Red Guard, the Cultural Revolution failed. Thousands of years old beliefs could not be washed away so easily. Even when religion was outlawed people still found ways to practice in private and out of sight of the authorities. The strength of spirit was not so easily broken.

⁴⁶ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Jiping Zuo, “Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China,” *Sociological Analysis* 52.

Deng Xiaoping gradually took power of China following Mao's death and emerged as the paramount leader in 1979. Deng began focusing on modernization and economic development, loosening regulations on certain aspects of social life. He lifted the ban on religion. Deng showed significant pragmatism when dealing with religion; enlightenment atheism prevailed over militant atheism.⁴⁹ Still, Mao's was the infallible leader of China. He still had many followers who challenge Deng's less radical policies. Deng also began the process of regulating contact with the Dalai Lama, who still lived in exile. Chinese representative met with Gyalo Dondup, the Dalai Lama's brother, in Hong Kong in 1979. This was a unilateral gesture towards reconciliation and Gyalo Dondup visited Beijing later that year. Deng indicated in this meeting that he was sincere in his efforts to improve the living conditions in Tibet and proposed a fact-finding mission as a gesture of good faith.⁵⁰ In the early days of Deng's leadership there was a sincere effort put forth by the CCP to allow increased religious freedom in Tibet. These meetings symbolized both parties willingness to compromise and follow the Middle Way.

Deng was attempting to mend a fractured society. The Cultural Revolution left the people of China feeling scared and lost. Deng knew that legitimization in Tibet through means such as granting more religious freedom would be far more effective than oppression. The Tibetan leadership had been hardened from 20 years in exile, though and discredited the 17 Point Agreement because of the condition of duress under which it had

⁴⁹ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

⁵⁰ Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print.

been signed or the fundamental breach as the 1950s had gone on.⁵¹ The Chinese government miscalculated the condition of the Tibetan government in exile, and the Tibetan government did not fully understand the situation that existed in Tibet. This gave way to an unsurpassable gap in expectations and when the delegations met Beijing was alarmed to hear the Tibetan delegation's open calls for independence.⁵² By October of 1980 Deng Xiaoping retreated from engagement by identifying the Dalai Lama as a separatist.

Hu Yaobang, the newly appointed party secretary, presented Gyalo Dondup the "Five Point Proposal" in 1981. This proposal made it very clear that Chinese government had no interest in discussing the political status of Tibet.⁵³ The Proposal invited the Dalai Lama back to China to solidify the bond between China and Tibet. They wanted the Dalai Lama to return, but only under very specific conditions. The Dalai Lama and his followers continued to push for greater independence than China was willing to grant. They proposed a demilitarized zone of peace in a unified Tibet that would have a high degree of autonomy in association with the PRC. This was deemed unacceptable by the Chinese delegation and by 1984 the conservative Tibet Autonomous Region party secretary, Yin Fatang, publicly accused the Dalai Lama of treason.⁵⁴

Deng also issued a new edict, "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Affairs during the Socialist Period of Our Country" in 1982. This document became the new

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

basis for religious policy in China.⁵⁵ This new policy falls into a lot of the same quandaries as its predecessors. While “religious freedom is guaranteed as long as the believers love the country, support CCP’s rule, and observe socialist laws,” only “normal” religious activities are protected.⁵⁶ During this time the Religious Affairs Bureau and the Public Security Bureau arbitrarily decided what was considered “normal”. Official legal existence could only be granted if you were a member of one of the “patriotic” churches led by the CCP.⁵⁷

By 1986 Deng had to retreat from his liberal agenda of modernization and economic development when he was accused of “bourgeois liberalism.” He was forced to purge Hu Yaobang in January 1987.⁵⁸ After the purges there was no one left who wanted to bring back the Dalai Lama. Tibet became less important to Chinese foreign policy and the CCP continued to operate with impunity within the Tibetan Plateau.

The longer the CCP occupied Tibet the less important it became for them to try and cooperate with the local Tibetan people and the Tibetan government in exile. There were a series of large riots that occurred in 1987-1989 that signified the unrest in Tibet.⁵⁹ The conditions put forth by both sides to reopen talks were not met and until 1989 there was little change.

⁵⁵ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print

⁵⁹ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

Within a year the Dalai Lama had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Berlin Wall fell and the Tiananmen Riots occurred.⁶⁰ Beijing's strategies for Tibet were in shambles. The Tibetan Plateau had only gotten poorer and the people were becoming more and more frustrated. The Dalai Lama used his international status to try and appeal to members of the international community. The CCP interpreted this as a hostile move. At a meeting of the politburo on October 19, 1989, it was decided that the relaxing of political controls since liberalization had caused the recent turmoil in Tibet.⁶¹ Mao's early policies of perusing unilateral talks with the Dalai Lama and Hu Yaobang's efforts were undermined by conservative critiques. They saw the Tibetan way of life as fundamentally backwards and argued for a more militant approach.

The fall of the Soviet Union, and the creation of many independent states, gave China a reason to fear a similar fate. Also, the mishandling of the Tiananmen riots and the Dalai Lama's celebrity status in the west made China look very bad to the international community. At the same time, the Chinese public was growing less and less sympathetic to the Tibetan People. The conservatives in the CCP took this opportunity to act. The mid-nineties saw some of the most brutal crackdowns in Tibet's history. Monks and monasteries were specifically targeted. They were seen as centers of anti-Chinese sentiment and hotbeds for "counter-revolutionary behavior." Because so much of Tibetan lives are centered on Buddhism monks and lamas were always community leaders. It was not only an act of religious oppression, but also political oppression.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print

In recent years China has softened its stance on Tibet. In 2001 they began a process of engagement. Following the Fourth Work Forum, the Chinese leadership established direct contact with the Dalai Lama's representative. China also released six high profile political prisoners as a sign of good faith. The CCP government denied that these meetings were for political reasons, however.⁶²

At the same time as this new policy China was trying to discretely infiltrate and take over Tibetan culture and religion. They chose their own Panchen Lama after abducting the one chosen by the Dalai Lama and incentivized many Han Chinese to move to Tibet. Melvyn Goldstein says "The large number of non-Tibetans living and working in Tibet provide Beijing a new and formidable pro-China constituency that increases its security there." For China this strategy has proved most useful. Mao's goal of trying to win the minds and hearts of the Tibetan People is being achieved by introducing vast numbers of pro-communist citizens. The Chinese leadership believes that the new Han Chinese will provide a new model of thinking and gradually eliminate Tibetan's "old" behavior and thinking.

Today, there are two official policies that guide their decision making process. The CCP believes its goal is to help people gradually emancipate themselves from religion and superstition. They also believe it is important to provide freedom to believe or not believe in religion, but to ultimately demote religious belief.⁶³ Jian Hsieh believes that the CCP's policy of religious freedom is nothing but a tactic of expediency; the ultimate goal for the CCP is to "help the people eradicate themselves from religious superstition. CCP's policies

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

indicate that regardless of how conservative or liberal the current leadership, after the Cultural Revolution economic growth and prosperity and social stability is paramount. Religion itself is rarely attacked; it is the social and cultural byproducts that cause friction in a Communist society. It is most important to note that China's number one priority is to maintain power. Guoguang Wu, "Exerting every effort, officials demonstrated remarkable containment ability in preventing each crisis from spreading into fundamental threat to China's economic prosperity and authoritarian institutions. Political stability, in the form of *unchallengable monopoly of public power by the Chinese Communist Party*, remained the highest priority in the regime's agenda.

There has been a resurgence of religion in China today. "Overcrowded churches and temples are common scenes in today's China," says Feng. While many Chinese are searching for true spirituality, most are simply curious. In Tibet many temples and monasteries have become tourist attractions. Tibetan Buddhism is now often viewed, as old and outdated, monasteries are now museums. This has meant that money has been invested in the restoration of many religious buildings. These small steps indicated a new openness to religion in the eyes of the Chinese people. For years there has been a stigma against religion in China, it was seen as foolish or wasteful, but now openness towards religion may be emerging in China. This must all be done in a way where the CCP doesn't lose "face." Melvin Goldstein agrees with this idea, but he doesn't go far enough with it. To truly save face the Tibetan people need to divorce religion from politics. When they are intertwined to heavily the CCP cannot give in to Tibetan Religion because it would be giving in to, in their minds, a hostile political body.

Chapter Three: The Religious Oppression of the Communist Party

China has systematically oppressed Buddhist institutions and organizations in Tibet since their initial occupation in 1951 in order to carry out their reforms. The Chinese Communist Party's actions concerning religious freedoms are only tangentially concerned with controlling people's personal religious choices; The CCP has always been more concerned with the political and social roles these monasteries and monks play in Tibetan society. China's highest priority in Tibet is to establish and maintain an unchallengeable monopoly of power. Buddhist institutions and figureheads are sources of resistance in Tibet against the Communist Party and therefore are very dangerous.

The main concern of the Chinese government is to ensure stability and political dominance in Tibet. When monks decide to protest or organize a resistance movement they become social leaders so the lay people also participate. Religious oppression is a byproduct of the CCP's greater political goals of fully (socially, culturally, and politically) integrating Tibet to greater China. They have systematically and consistently oppressed religious society in Tibet through subversively trying to co-opt religion and outright subjugation.

Ever since the early 50s monks and monasteries have played a large role preserving the Tibetan way of life. It was common to have more than one person in a Tibetan family to become a monk or nun. Also, monks and monasteries oversaw the political administration of Tibet. They embodied a duality of the secular and religious. Monks and monasteries also had a strong relationship with the nobles and supported a feudal-like system. Despite the economic inequality a feudal system can bring there is very little that indicates that there was unrest or discomfort caused by this.

The first evidence that indicates the CCP's religiously oppressive goals occurred during the social reform period preceding the 1959 rebellion. In 1958 the East Tibetan newspaper, a publication run by the CCP, printed:

There are 390 monasteries in the Karzey District that are engaged in lawlessness and sabotage. All the monasteries are reactionaries under religious guise. They are all instruments of exploitation, the stronghold of autocratic feudal lords who stand in the way of progressive socialistic production and they are center of rebellion against the reform. If they are completely destroyed then the autocratic feudal oppression and exploitation can be destroyed.⁶⁴

For years the feudal society and monastic society have existed side by side. Their goal, however, was to dismantle the religious infrastructure to follow Mao's disastrous Five Year Plan. Other aspects of Tibetan society had been "improved" by the CCP, and now it was time for members of monastic society to stop being "parasites." Monks were detractors to society; the CCP saw no reason for them to continue to practice religion when there was other work that needed to be done.

China also stripped monasteries of a great deal of their power during the 50s to reform their "archaic methods of food storage, supply, and distribution." The people of Tibet now relied on the central Communist government to provide them with food. They became more and more reliant on the Chinese government, as opposed to the Tibetan political infrastructure. The social reforms during the 50s and 60s frequently attacked the power of monastic society. According to Fenggang Yang, "The party-state took pragmatic

⁶⁴ Patterson, George N. "China and Tibet: Background to the Revolt." *The China Quarterly* 1 (1960): 87. Print.

yet strategic measures to co-opt and control a select few leaders of the major religions and through the cooperative leaders coerced the religious groups and individual to cut off their imperialist ties with the outside world and to cleanse feudalist elements from within.” The CCP at this time was very concerned with western influences from Tibet infecting Chinese society.

The uprising of 1959 solidified the connection between religious intuitions and anti-Chinese sentiment and activities. A large number of those who fought in the rebellions were monks and the leadership of the rebellion was closely linked to the religio-political monastic infrastructure. The Chinese government in Tibet renounced the 17 Point Agreement, allowing them to close down most of Tibet’s several thousand monasteries, and created a new Communist governmental structure.⁶⁵ After the initial crackdown in 1959 monasteries were far more closely monitored. Monasteries now had to answer to a central Communist government. This gave them the opportunity to put whomever they wanted at the heads of major monasteries. Gouguang Wu states:

The party-state took pragmatic yet strategic measures to co-opt and control a select few leaders of the major religions and through the cooperative leaders coerced the religious groups and individual to cut off their imperialist ties with the outside world and to cleanse feudalist elements from within.

These new leaders were thoroughly vetted by the Chinese government and were not chosen because of their religious credential. The new leaders were more concerned with

⁶⁵ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

serving the party than serving the Tibetan people. Monastic oppression continued relatively unchanged for almost 30 years after this.

Following the Third Work Forum in 1992 the Chinese Communist Party published *A Golden Bridge Leading Into a New Era*, a summary of their new policies concerning Tibet. This paper states that their real concern is the perceived relationship between the clergy and the continuing activities of the pro-independence movement.⁶⁶ It states, “The influence of our enemies in foreign countries, especially the “Dalai clique,” was slipping into the monasteries of our region more than ever. They assume that to get hold of a monastery is the equivalent of getting hold of a district of the Communist Party.” Again, the CCP is worried about losing power and foreign influence in Tibet, not the direct effects of Tibetan Buddhism. Following this monks’ and nuns’ activities became far more closely monitored.

On May 24th, 1993 a large-scale demonstration seized the capital of Lhasa.⁶⁷ The protest was significant, not only because of its size, but because it was comprised mostly of lay people. The protest was allowed to continue for six hours until the protesters shifted the focus of their chants from rising food prices to calls for independence. The security forces immediately began to use tear gas and violence to break up the protest.

Protests had consisted of mainly monks in the past so the increase in lay people’s participation was directly attributed to the monasteries and religious figures insidious actions against the state by the Chinese cadre members in, and out of, Tibet. The Chinese government began to feel more comfortable taking punitive actions against Tibetan

⁶⁶ Barnett, Robert. *Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996. Print.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

dissidents. They began to carry out “preemptive house arrests” and the number political detainees in 1993 were more than doubled from the previous year.⁶⁸

Many of these political prisoners are monks and nuns. In 1995 approximately three quarters of all prisoners in Tibet were members of the monastic society.⁶⁹ Many of these prisoners are held in detention centers or, *kanshousuo*. These detention centers are to “shelter and investigate” the prisoners, and while in the mainland a prisoner cannot be held for more than three months, in Tibet prisoners can be held without a trial in these centers indefinitely. These centers, along with police stations, are the location of most of the torture that occurs in Tibet

Members of religious society are often the recipients of torture in these facilities. Phurbu, a monk from the Palhalhupug monastery, was captured by the Public Security Bureau and tortured because they found no evidence to incriminate him. They needed a confession. He was brought to the detention center in Seitru and tortured for 22 days.

...I was interrogated and tortured every day... they kicked me in the kidneys and hit me with a small iron stick on my elbows, knees, and other joints. After twenty-two days I was taken to Gutsa where I was put in a small cell, all alone, it had no windows, only a small hatch in the door that let in a strip of light. I was kept in this cell for five months and eleven days.⁷⁰

Eventually Phurbu was forced to confess that he had put up a counter revolutionary poster and was sentenced to three years of forced labor. These stories are common in Tibet. The

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

utter brutality of the Chinese Government undeniably surrounds monastic life. They Government can operate with impunity, occupying wherever they like and taking whomever they please.

The Chinese government restricts the number of monks and nuns at monasteries. The Pel Kor monastery in Gyantse had 1500 monks at its peak; the Chinese government restricts them to no more than 40 monks.⁷¹ There aren't enough monks to do many religious ceremonies. The CCP's restrictions contradict the religious freedom granted under the 17 Point Agreement. Once again, the laws on paper are of no consequence to regulation. By May 1994, the Samtenling nunnery in Qinghai was ordered to reduce its population to 100 nuns from 120 nuns.⁷² The Chinese also insisted that no new nuns be indoctrinated, even if another nun had died of left.

The 1993 protest led to further restrictions of religious ceremonies. Chinese Communist watchdogs, under the title of "work teams," would take up residence in monasteries to monitor behavior. The teams forbade monks to carry out rituals in private homes even when someone had died, for example. Also, any monk who had previously been accused of protesting or anti-communist behavior would be prohibited from joining any other monastery. They were also forbidden from leading any sort of religious life; they couldn't carry private religious items, nor travel without explicit police permission.⁷³

The CCP recognizes the power that these monasteries still hold within the community. At one time, they were centers of art, education, and Tibetan culture, now

⁷¹ "Tibetan Monks: A Controlled Life." *BBC News*. 20 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 Jan. 2012. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7307495.stm>>.

⁷² Barnett, Robert. *Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996. Print.

⁷³ Ibid.

monasteries are used by the CCP to further control the Tibetan population. A Communist Party official who makes sure that the government rules visits every monastery and nunnery in Tibet at least once every few weeks and regulations are being correctly applied. Butri, a Tibetan Communist Party cadre, explains: "I visit these temples once or twice a month. I tell them what to do and what not to do. They all listen and say nothing."⁷⁴ The once great monasteries of Tibet have either been destroyed or turned into tourist attractions. They have become marginalized in Tibetan society. Hordes of tourists walk through larger monasteries, buying hot dogs or trinkets in the lobby, and the monks are little more than custodians.

The Chinese government closely watches and regulates how many new monks are ordained and who is allowed to become a monk. Becoming a monk or nun was an important part of many young Tibetans lives, but this is not the case anymore. Because of stringent restrictions many Tibetans cannot take part in this part of their culture. They are paragons. Monks are the caretakers of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture. They have reinterpreted their role as leaders of society and religion in recent years and have seized their roles as Tibetan leaders. This is one of the reasons monks have been so instrumental in Chinese resistance. This in turn, explains the harsh restrictions placed on monks and nuns in Tibet. To attack monastic society is to remove the keystone from Tibetan culture.

The Panchen Lama has been used as a tool to legitimize the CCP's occupation of Tibet. They have aggressively used the Panchen Lama to undermine the Dalai Lama and

⁷⁴ "Tibetan Monks: A Controlled Life." *BBC News*. 20 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 Jan. 2012. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7307495.stm>>.

pursue their own goals.⁷⁵ In May 1995, the Dalai Lama announced from exile that a six-year-old boy, Gedun Choekyi, was the living reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Chinese government did not approve of this selection and chose their own Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, in November.⁷⁶ The new Panchen Lama was chosen directly by the Communist Party leaders in Beijing. They were very careful in their selection, they made sure to pick someone whose parents were communist party sympathizers. This was an unprecedented move by China because they have very little to no precedent to do this; the Tibetan people always selected the Panchen Lama free from outside influence. The Chinese government had worked with the previous Panchen Lama at times and used his position to legitimize their actions. The Panchen Lama stayed when the Dalai Lama fled. While he did cooperate with the Chinese government it is widely accepted that he was coerced and was regularly imprisoned and tortured whenever he spoke out against the CCP. It is believed that the Chinese government poisoned him (in the last days of his life he began heavily criticizing the CCP's policies in Tibet).

China's selection of the new Panchen Lama coincided with a brutal propaganda campaign against the Dalai Lama. They attacked not only his political legitimacy, but his religious legitimacy as well. They now had their own puppet religious figure that gave them significant religious legitimacy in Tibet. The CCP proceeded to dismiss many monastery heads who spoke out against China's selection. Government appointed bureaucrats were elected to replace these leaders, despite a stated commitment by the Chinese government to respect the Tibetan elected management in monasteries. The CCP

⁷⁵ Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

⁷⁶ Mehra, Parshotam. "The New Panchen Lama: A Trojan Horse?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 24 Feb. 1996: 456-57. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Feb. 2012.

proceeded to purge the Tashilhunpo monastery, the home of the Panchen Lama. These moves were “classic security operations of rapid containment: the elimination of enemy leaders; demanding an oath of loyalty from all potential enemy leaders; and flushing enemy supporters into the open and eliminating them. The replacement of the Taashilhunpo leadership completed the operation by rewarding supporters with leadership positions.”⁷⁷ This created a schism in Tibetan Buddhism: do the Tibetan people worship the true Panchen Lama, and risk prosecution, or do they worship the Panchen Lama selected by the Chinese government? The question has divided Tibetan society and, as more and more Tibetans are born into a Chinese Tibet, more of them fall in line with the CCP’s edicts.

The Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama are cosmically connected according to Tibetan Buddhism. Their spirits have known each other for hundreds of years so each one plays an integral role in the selection of the other. The selection of the Chinese Panchen Lama has broken that chain. The CCP has not only attacked the ethereal part of Tibetan Buddhism, they have intertwined themselves with the cosmic and spiritual side of Tibetan Buddhism. In 2002 the Dalai Lama fell ill and the question of reincarnation was raised. He had already stated that the Tibetan theocracy, based on a reincarnation system should be abandoned. If he were to ever return to China he would not want to take part in politics.⁷⁸

Mao was a keen student of history and he knew that he had to win the hearts and minds of the people; Mao felt that the best way to insure a long lasting union was to gain the approval of the people. During this time the Religious Affairs Bureau began to oversee

⁷⁷ Barnett, Robert. *Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996. Print.

⁷⁸ Chen, Yuhui. "Dalai Lama: To Pursue Tibetan Self-government, but Not Separate from China." *Xizang Tongxun* Mar.-Apr. 2002. JSTOR.

all religious activity in China.⁷⁹ They were mainly concerned with driving out all foreign and bourgeois influence from China. The goal was not to strip the Chinese people, who now included Tibetans, of their religion; they wanted to expunge all foreign influences from China and maintain political legitimacy.

⁷⁹ Yang, Fenggang. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

Chapter Four: The Dalai Lama's Role

The Dalai Lama has played a huge role in the Chinese Communist Party's Tibetan policy decisions. The Dalai Lama is a huge threat to their power and influence in Tibet. The Dalai Lama is a national figurehead who, even outside of Tibet, is the leader of the Tibetan people. The Chinese Communist Party's attacks on the Dalai Lama are motivated by their political and national objective, to create a lasting bond between China and Tibet, but their oppression of the Dalai Lama has affected the Tibetan people negatively. The Dalai Lama does have the power to be an impetus to bring about more freedom in Tibet but the CCP's prosecution of him thus far has affected the Tibetan People's ability to freely practice religion.

The Dalai Lama links Tibetan religion to the threat of political disharmony because he is a symbol of both the Church and State and has advocated independence prior to 1989. China believes the Dalai Lama is responsible for Tibetan unrest. The Dalai Lama is the "God King" of Tibet and Dalai Lamas are the supreme authority in Tibetan politics and religion. Dalai Lamas never had a total power, other monks, lamas, and feudal lords were also able to exercise political and religious power, but they were always extremely influential. It isn't an authoritarian position. Despite the new government structure put in place by the CCP and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, he is still viewed by Tibetans as their leader. The Chinese government has gone as far to outlaw any pictures or photos of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese Communist Party does not have a problem with the Dalai Lama's religious position; they must continue to hold on to their monopoly of power to control and rule the Tibetan People. The Dalai Lama represents the political and religious duality that

permeates Tibetan society, to allow the worship of the Dalai Lama is the same as worshipping a rebel leader.

China has used economic development in other areas to quell social unrest but this strategy has proved ineffective in Tibet. Gouguang Wu states "China has achieved material prosperity, but with out social peace." The wave protests beginning in 2008 support this statement. They have become far more explosive and volatile in recent years. During one of the largest protests in March, 2008 the Tibetan Regional Government claimed that 18 civilians and 1 police officer had been killed and over 600 more people had been injured, many of whom were in critical condition.⁸⁰ The Tibetan Government in Exile claimed the death toll to be over 80. These riots marred the image China was trying to portray to the world during the Olympics. Also, Hu Jintao had to leave the G 8 summit because of riots in Xin Jian, a neighboring province. This was very embarrassing for the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama was blamed for this. They use the social unrest to demonize the Dalai Lama. They blame him for the violence so they can gain more control of Tibet's monastic society.

After the deadly riots of March 14, 2008, thousands of local officials were sent to Tibet's monasteries and take turns to stay there as "station cadres" to strengthen monastery management which include promoting the legal awareness of monks and nuns and dissuade them from being duped by separatist forces and ensure the normal practice

⁸⁰ "18 Civilians, 1 Police Officer Killed by Lhasa Rioters." *People's Daily Online*. Xinhua, 22 Mar. 2008. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.
<<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/6378824.html>>.

of Buddhism.⁸¹ The Chinese government uses opportunities like this to justify their actions as they oppress the religious freedom of monastic society. The XIV Dalai Lama isn't the source of these negative sentiments, but his position makes him a target.

The Dalai Lama has also spoken out against the Chinese government, directly undercutting their efforts of legitimization in Tibet. While the Chinese government was selecting their own Panchen Lama the Dalai Lama rejected both their method and their authority to approve or disapprove the final selection of Tibetan Lamas.⁸² The Chinese hoped that their Panchen Lama would solidify their sovereignty in Tibet and give them the social legitimacy they so desperately want. When the Dalai Lama spoke out against them he stripped their selection of a lot of popular support. When he asserts his power over the Chinese he further distances himself from him.

The Dalai Lama has, and continues to, mar the image of China around the world. While China is trying to portray itself as a progressive, first world country, the Dalai Lama is a constant reminder of the brutality of the Chinese government and illegitimate occupation of Tibet. After the Dalai Lama's secret meetings with the Chinese Government 1982 and 1984 he began to seek support in the United States and Europe.⁸³ This was the first time he presented himself to the world as a political leader, directly stating that Tibet was illegally occupied by China and asserted that Tibet should be a self-governing democratic entity with a constitution that granted Western-style rights. During these

⁸¹ YAN. "Tibet's Officials Vow to Strengthen Management of Monasteries." *欢迎访问新华网*. 8 Jan. 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2012. <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-01/08/c_131349002.htm>.

⁸² Goldstein, Melvyn C. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997. Print.

⁸³ Goldstein, Melvyn. "The Dalai Lama's Dilemma." *Foreign Affairs* (1998). *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

meeting Monks in Lhasa demonstrated to support the Dalai Lama's new initiative, this led to a full-scale riot.⁸⁴ The Chinese government blamed the Dalai Lama and began another crack down on monasteries.

It is difficult to quantify the effect of the Dalai Lama's international appeals, but what is clear is that after the United States granted China Most Favored Nation status in 1994, China was given free reign to imprison, torture, and kill in Tibet. The average sentence of Tibetan political prisoners doubled to just less than six years. The response to the '94 riots was also unique because it was a represented a shift in China's concept of "unacceptable dissent." May 1994 was the first indication that previously tolerated economic protests would be met by force as if they were covert political attacks.⁸⁵ After America began to need China, the Dalai Lama's cries for help became more and more easy to ignore.

The Dalai Lama's international efforts have time and time again by the CCP as ways to "split the motherland" and "send agents and spies into China to expand their underground reactionary organizations and to intensify political, ideological and religious infiltration."⁸⁶ This in turn allows the Chinese Communist Party to further dismantle and corrupt monastic society in Tibet so they can strengthen the position of the Communist Party. The CCP is aware of how powerful these monasteries are in Tibet so in addition to marginalizing them they also infiltrate the monasteries with their own puppet leaders to prevent the Dalai Lama from "corrupting Buddhism." In the past 20 years China has

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Barnett, Robert. *Cutting off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996. Print.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

become a world superpower and the international community is no longer able to influence domestic Chinese Policy in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama gave up calls for full independence from China when he released the Strasberg Proposal in 1988. He says very clearly that independence was no longer the goal; he wanted increased freedom and more human rights. While the Chinese government ignored this proposal and the Dalai Lama retracted it in 1992, it is a landmark declaration because it showed that the Dalai Lama was willing to give up complete independence to improve the lives of the Tibetan people in Tibet. By 1992, Han Chinese people were arriving in numbers and China's military had already developed a strong infrastructure that would swiftly deal with any military revolt aimed at independence; the Dalai Lama began following the political Middle Way. The Dalai Lama is "downplaying political and economic power and pursuing greater power as to religion and culture."⁸⁷ The Chinese government is still weary of the Dalai Lama's involvement in Tibet so he hasn't been able to do much, but these new goals are far more realistic than independence. Also, by ending calls for independence the Chinese government has less cause to oppress the religious centers and people. It is important because the Dalai Lama expressed greater flexibility on the key issues of Tibet, such as its independence, and is pushing to regularize contact between China and the Tibetan Government in Exile.⁸⁸ The Chinese could not make the first move because it would make them seem weak and that they were catering to the Tibetan Government in Exile and international pressure. The Dalai Lama's strategy gives them an opportunity to legitimize their presence in Tibet.

⁸⁷ Sautman, Barry, and Baogang He. "The Politics of the Dalai Lama's New Initiative for Autonomy." *Public Affairs University of British Columbia* 74.4 (2005). *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40022970>>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

The Dalai Lama has tried to separate himself from the politics of Tibet. He wants to free Tibetan religion in Tibet and if religion and politics are intertwined China is forced to oppress both. The Dalai Lama stated that he doesn't want to be part of the Lama selection process anymore.⁸⁹ The selection of the Panchen Lama, and the Dalai Lama's criticism of it, was a political catastrophe in Tibet, many Tibetans took to the streets in protest. Because the Dalai Lama is the supreme authority in Tibet it turned many Tibetans against the CCP. The Dalai Lama has given China legitimacy by stepping back from this process. The Tibetan Government in Exile also said that Tibetan leaders in Tibet "should be allowed genuine spiritual and cultural autonomy and a degree of political space."⁹⁰ He is demonstrating his support for the local Communist government.

The situation in Tibet is potentially more volatile than it was during the protests of the 80s because the disillusion has spread to the Tibetan Cadre and state workers.⁹¹ According to Baogang He, the riots and economic slowdown in 2008 and 2009 have been destabilizing forces. They attack two main sources of legitimacy, economic growth and social order, to legitimize their government. With China changing their going to have to look to new sources of legitimacy, such as the Dalai Lama, to rely on.

The relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government is quickly changing. China has become a world power and has effectively marginalized the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama has gotten older and Tibet becomes more and more Chinese every day. The Chinese government is most concerned with building legitimacy in Tibet, while

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print.

the Dalai Lama wants to preserve Tibetan culture and religion. According to the theory of deliberate democracy deliberation in and of itself can be useful. The outcome is secondary to a discussion between two parties because when they are allowed to talk and discuss they begin to understand the other side more clearly. If they Dalai Lama and the CCP can understand each other they will be more likely to find common ground and improve the situation of the Tibetan people and the Chinese Government.

While the Chinese government sees the Dalai Lama as an antagonizing force, he is their best hope of legitimacy in Tibet. He is the only living person who can bring the two sides together. Many Tibetan scholars see him as an only an antagonizing force, but he can legitimize the Communist Party's rule in Tibet. He is one of the only things that CCP wants from Tibetan Buddhism.

Chapter 5: Looking Forward

It is hard to be optimistic about Tibet. When looking at possibly ways to increase their religious freedom and political autonomy there are few viable options. Since the Chinese invasion in 1951 the CCP have established a strong military presence that allows them to begin to act with impunity. Despite riots and the Tibetan people's widespread resentment for the Chinese government due to their oppressive policies, the CCP has maintained a monopoly of power in Tibet that has only become stronger with time. China's meteoric rise to power during the past 40 years has propped up the Communist party, but can it last?

The CCP's presence in Tibet has gone beyond military occupation. Through cultural and ethnic integration the Communist Party can now justify the further destruction of Tibetan culture and religion by calling it "progress." The Chinese government is aware that this solution is not a permanent one, but Tibet has nothing to offer the Chinese government, they have no bargaining power. The only thing that hasn't been infected by the Communist party are the Tibetan people's hearts and minds. The Chinese Communist Party's goal in Tibet is for the Tibetan People to sincerely accept Chinese sovereignty. The political application of the Middle Way, a method of compromise and mutual understanding, has allowed the Tibetan people to take small, but important, steps towards cultural preservation and therefore decreasing animosity towards the Chinese government.

The Fourth Work Forum in June 2001 indicated that the Chinese government is willing to make small compromises that improve the lives of the Tibetan people. Work forums occur only once every several years and play an important role in policy making. The senior leadership decided to renew the process of engagement with the Dalai Lama,

reversing its official position for the first time since 1989.⁹² This has led to several visits and talks between high-level Chinese bureaucrats and members of the Tibetan Government in Exile. Gyalo Dondup, the Dalai Lama's brother, led a visit in September of 2002 to China. Beijing refused to publically acknowledge the visit's political nature, reinforcing fears among Tibetan leaders that the dialogue process was a sham. Gyalo Dondup said he was not concerned that the talks weren't made public and it was a "step by step" process.⁹³ A second visit in May 2003 had different results.

Gyalo Dondup returned to China in 2003 and continued to make progress. Despite being prohibited from visiting many sacred Tibetan sites, China acknowledged the political nature of his visit. The details remain unknown to the public but Gyalo Dondup said there were "major differences on a number of issues, including the fundamental ones, but the discussions were the most extensive and serious to date."⁹⁴ This optimism was virtually unseen in the dialogue processes of the 70s and 80s. The Fourth Work Forum did not leave a lot of lasting, tangible changes, but it demonstrated the CCP's willingness to view the Tibetan leadership as a way to legitimize their occupation, rather than seeing the TGIE as their enemies.

China demonstrated their sincerity by releasing six high profile political prisoners from Tibet.⁹⁵ This gesture was highly publicized and was not solely altruistic; it portrayed China as a progressive modern country to America, and other western states, which

⁹² Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print.

⁹³ "Gyalo Thondup Says Tibet-China Contact Should Be a Two-Way Process - Wwww.phayul.com." *Phayul.com*. Web. 04 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=4589>>

⁹⁴ Rabgey, Tashi, and Tseten Wangchuk. Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004. Print.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

increased its trade viability. Regardless of their dual motives, it is still a gesture that is indicative of a shift in the attitude of the CCP.

The high restrictions that are put on the monasteries and monks in Tibet have caused many high profile religious leaders to flee or defect. This has increased the animosity felt by the Tibetan people towards the Chinese government. Arija Rinpoche, the abbot the Kumbum Monastery, defected to the United States in 1998.⁹⁶ This was very embarrassing for the Chinese government; he has previously been a stabilizing factor in Tibet, preaching moderation and non-violence. He left because he was not free to practice his religion in a way he found acceptable. Because of China's restrictions to increase social order, religious restrictions to prevent monks from organizing protests for example, they have lost one of their potential allies.

Far more damaging than the loss of Arija Rinpoche was the fleeing of the 14 year old Karmapa, one of the only religious leaders recognized by both the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. The Karmapa was one of the best chances China had to legitimize their rule in Tibet.⁹⁷ He was celebrated by the people and symbolized the potential for mutual understanding between China and Tibet. When he fled to Dharamsala, the headquarters of the TGIE, not only did China lose a source of legitimacy, the TGIE received one. There is a clear connection between the crackdowns of monasteries and monastic practices with the fleeing of important religious figures. China's stubbornness and short sightedness prevented them from taking the Middle Way path and forgoing future stability.

Tibetan leaders who can work with the Chinese government are a key component of long-term stability. They do not only have the Chinese government's ear, they can also help

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

bring about change that is mutually beneficial for the Tibetan people and the CCP. Directed change, a cultural process in which internal or external agents make more or less intentional, coordinated, and sustained modifications or reforms to a society and culture, is far more successful in winning the hearts and minds of the people than instituted direct rule. Fei Xiao-Tong and Lin Yao-Hua, two Chinese anthropologists, have argued that the only way ethnic minorities will full accept Chinese sovereignty is through self-conscious and voluntary means. Sweeping and subversive restrictions on Tibetan culture and religious will only spread anti-Han sentiment, not quell it. The Chinese government in Beijing must become more open and understanding of the Tibetan people so they can separate their political goals from the cultural collateral damage.

One of the best, and most important ways the Tibetan people have made headway in cultural preservation is through education. Education is one of the most important ways to preserve a nation's culture. China has very deliberately been trying to undermine the Tibetan way of life, and religion, by closely controlling their education system. Some scholars have gone as far to say that the manipulation of the education system is the "most pervasive and, in effect, insidious technique for destroying Tibetan...culture."⁹⁸ Before the Communist take over lamastaries were the "aegis for education and were the sole custodians of Tibetan culture. With the "liberation" everything changed. Schools became education centers that are closely monitored and the vast majority of Tibetan nomads were left without places to receive education. Edward Kormondy states:

The Chinese government is intent in Sinicizing, or more specifically "Han-izing" all of its minorities' nationalities. The

⁹⁸ Kormondy, Edward J. "Minority Education in Mongolia and Tibet." *International Review of Education* 48.5 (2002): 377-401. *Jstor*. Web. 11 Feb. 2012.

goal is to minimize if not destroy the many unique cultural groups and homogenize the entire population into the many unique cultural groups and homogenize the entire population into the mode, thought, and culture of the dominant Han.

Despite these challenges, the Chinese government has allowed a certain level of Tibetan cultural education and religious instruction.

According to the often-ignored Chinese constitution “citizens of all nationalities have the right to use the spoken and written language of their own nationalities.” This guarantees a level of tolerance of Tibetan language instruction, two thirds of the classes mandated by the ministry of education are taught in Tibetan, but beginning in third grade most instruction takes place in Chinese.⁹⁹ There are few opportunities for higher education in Tibet forcing many Tibetans to leave Tibet for college. Many Tibetan university graduates either return home “han-ized” or remain in the mainland, thereby brain draining Tibet.”¹⁰⁰ The need for Tibetan education centers and Tibetan run schools is a key part of preserving their culture.

The Chongba School run is a private middle and elementary school that was founded by the Rabgey family. They focus on Tibetan cultural education and religious freedom. The school is less than ten years old, but the vast majority students test in the highest percentile on Chinese standardized tests. The school is a perfect example of self directed educational change can allow Tibetans to excel on Chinese language tests, and maintain their cultural identity.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

China has tried again and again to force the Tibetan people to conform to a Han Communist way of life but the Tibetans have such a strong and unique culture that they have continued to resist Chinese cultural change. Subversive measures have failed. While the Chinese government may outlaw religious practices and crack down on culture, many Tibetans still continue to live, and worship, in their own way. For example, many Tibetans keep a photograph of the Dalai Lama in their homes and people privately worship their chosen deities. If the Chinese government were to allow these practices to be done in the open, the Tibetan people would be more likely to accept China's political sovereignty. At the core of the Sino-Tibetan conflict there lays a solution that can only be found with compromise.

Conclusion

Few conflicts are dearer to my heart than the plight of the Tibetan people. I first visited Tibet in 2007 and even through my teenage jadedness I felt something; something about Tibet reached out and grabbed, refusing to let me go no matter how far I am from the Temples, Monasteries, and the hundreds of other wonders of Tibet. I was also struck by the direness of their situation. While I had read about the forced integration of Han Communism and the brutal oppression of the Tibetan people, I was not prepared for how aggressive the Chinese Communist Parties policies were affecting the Tibetan people. From the balconies of the deserted Dalai Lama's summer palace, one can see a statue of Chinese soldiers hoisting a Chinese flag. The inscription reads: Thank you great Communists for liberating Tibet. The Tibetans don't even know whom they needed to be liberated from. It would be against my nature to ignore what is going on in Tibet.

I used several methodological approaches in my thesis, but most importantly I examined how Civil Religion functioned in Tibet and the interplay between religion and politics. Tibetan culture, politics, and society all center around their religion; therefore, when the Chinese Government tries to impose their own cultural policies and political infrastructure Tibetan Buddhism is attacked. Chinese Communist, and now Neo-Communism, requires a strong centralized system of government so if Tibet is granted more autonomy, China's central governmental strategies suffer. Only when one can understand the different forces at work can one understand how to work with the CCP for greater freedom in Tibet.

I challenge Melvin Goldstein's theory that the Chinese Communist Party's greater investments in Tibet will better the lives of the Tibetan people because of a trickle down

effect. While some Tibetans are getting richer, they are becoming culturally bankrupt. With more Chinese money comes more Chinese influence and it becomes harder and harder to claim that Tibet should be ruled by Tibetans. Deliberative democracy is useful in a situation such as this, putting people in a room together and making them talk will bring about greater understanding and sympathy towards the other party, but policy change in China will only come when the central government has something to gain by negotiating. The Tibetan people need to find leverage against the Communist Party. I have challenged the stereotype that the Communist Party oppression of Tibetan Buddhism is driven by a policy to eradicate religion; instead I believe that their policies are driven by a need to secure Tibet politically and end calls for independence.

I've gained a much better understanding of civil religion and the all-encompassing role that Tibetan Buddhism plays in Tibet. Not only is Tibetan Buddhism often cited as the most important part of a Tibetan person's life, it is the backbone of many people morals and worldviews. To separate Buddhism from the people of Tibet would be akin to taking away purpose from their lives. I also learned that the Chinese government doesn't understand this and doesn't feel they need to. Some people in China are willing to learn and accept religion for what it is, but that movement is only growing slowly.

Writing a history of Tibet's relationship with China has given me insight into how Tibetan Buddhism came to exist in its present form. It is important to understand that Tibet controlled large portions of China and even ransacked its capital in the past. These facts and events are often left out by the Chinese government when they discuss Tibet's claims to independence. The leadership of Tibetan Buddhism, most importantly the Karmapa, the Dalai Lama, and the Panchen Lama, has always worked together. Very rarely

would the leadership enter into disputes or go against one another. This only makes China's insistence on driving them apart all the more tragic.

Through my study of religion I've realized that religion is present in all areas of culture, Tibetan or otherwise. Even in China today, Confucian social rules and constructs dictate society. In America the Puritan work ethic drives us to work long and hard hours and our films, books, and advertisements are rife with religious imagery. Religion is one of the corner stones of every culture in the world. Even in countries where they claim religion is lazy and worthless, their leaders turn into pseudo-religious figureheads who are worshiped. The hundreds of Chinese people who pay respect to Mao's tomb every day are evidence enough.

The Tibetan people have been fighting to preserve their culture and way of life since the Chinese invasion of 1951. The CCP has operated with impunity when restricting and oppressing religious freedoms and Tibetan culture in Tibet. The CCP's goal is not to dismantle the Tibetan way of life, their goal has always been long term political legitimacy and stability in Tibet, at any cost. Most notably China has oppressed religious freedom in Tibet by strongly regulating monastic society, driving out or capturing important Buddhist figures, such as the Dalai Lama or the Karmapa, and by restricting the Tibetan people's ability to worship on their own. Protests and violence by Tibetans have only been met with harsher punishments, the only solution and way to move forward is through the political application of the Middle Way and compromise.

Growing up in China, I was aware of the situation in Tibet. I knew they were a different people who had a different language and a different way of life. I didn't understand how brutally they have been oppressed until I visited the TAR in 2007. Most of

their monasteries and important religious sites have been destroyed. The monasteries that have been allowed to stay open have become tourist attractions, selling hot dogs and trinkets to you as you walk out. While Han Chinese have become interested in Tibetan Buddhism in recent years, it is only a curiosity, the vast majority of Chinese citizens don't understand why Tibetans won't abandon their "ancient" and "backwards" culture for progressive Chinese socialism. The Chinese people believe that they are doing a service for the Tibetan people by helping them get rid of their antiquated way of life.

There is a lack of understanding on both sides. When most Hans hear about the protests and violence in Tibet their response is to always blame the Tibetan "troublemakers." Protests are often led by monks (they are the leaders of the community so it is only natural they play a leadership role in these protests) so the CCP cites protests as a reason to take over monasteries in Tibet. They do not consider that their own government is to blame. With new avenues to find information, such as the Internet, the younger generations are beginning to feel more sympathetic towards the Tibetan people; they begin to understand that the situation is far more complicated than they assumed. Right now, the Tibetan people's goals should not be gaining full independence or overthrowing the Chinese government, they simply need to find common ground with members of the Chinese government and public. When opposing sides are forced to talk to one another they begin to understand things from the other side's perspective.

Of course, greater understanding will not lead to fast results. The process of increasing religious freedoms and autonomy is a slow, arduous process. The Tibetan people need to understand that violent protests are not the best way to find avenues for change. These protests do remind the international community that Tibet is being

unwillingly occupied, but China's new global power makes other countries opinions and actions far more inconsequential than they once were. The Chinese government will never give Tibet more autonomy or freedoms willingly unless the Tibetan people accept the legitimacy of Chinese rule.

There are certain areas where the Chinese government is willing to find compromises. Education is one of the best fields for the Tibetan people to push for compromise in. There have been several success cases, such as the Chongba School, where the Chinese government has allowed Tibetan students to attend schools run and staffed by Tibetans. These schools often do very well on regional exams and have demonstrated to the Chinese government that Tibetan run schools can work within Chinese society.

Throughout my research I've learned that the Chinese government's Tibetan policy is not only dictated by the actions of the Tibetan people. Tibet is a huge area, about on third of the total landmass of China, and if China relinquished control of Tibet they would also have to grant more freedoms to other minority areas. Also, Tibet is an important source for natural resources, including coal, which China desperately needs. The Tibetan people have been against this mining for decades, it goes against their Buddhist beliefs, and would most likely deprive China of resources. Finally, Tibet is also provides China with a comfortable buffer zones against aggressors from the west. China is not oppressing Tibet because they feel like it; they need Tibet to be under their thumb for important economic and political reasons.

Unfortunately, the Tibetan people do not care about what China needs they want their freedom. The Tibetan people have to understand the needs and goals of the Chinese

government so they can learn how to bargain and find situations where the outcome will be mutually beneficial. Still, these opportunities are few and far between.

Still, the biggest problem in Tibet is that China holds all the cards. Between its new international standing, established military presence, and support of the Chinese People, China can still operate with impunity in Tibet. Atrocities are easily covered up and their brutal methods continue to this day. It is difficult to find a solution for Tibet. The two sides are still so far apart, ideologically, and while China is content to simply stonewall the Tibetan people and the Tibetan Government in Exile, the Tibetan people are content to keep fighting. Although soon no one will remember what it was like to live in a free Tibet with the Lamas ruling over him or her. That generation is dying.

The future of Tibet is not easy to imagine. While much of the change comes from within Tibet, what the Chinese leadership decides to do is just as important. I believe that China will develop a strongly democratic middle class who will call for the end to civil rights abuses and recognize the need to give Tibet greater freedom, but I don't know when this will happen. For the foreseeable future Tibet will have to take advantage of their Buddhist teaching and accept the Middle Way as the most successful way to bring about a better way of life. The Chinese government is slowly realizing that Tibetan Buddhism isn't a rebellious organization aimed at the overthrow of the Chinese Communist Party and hopefully will allow them to practice religion in a way the Tibetan people see fit.

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