

Multination States in Asia

Accommodation or Resistance

Edited by

JACQUES BERTRAND

University of Toronto

ANDRÉ LALIBERTÉ

University of Ottawa



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can benefit personally from it. If such circumstances were to prevail, the issue of a Taiwanese nation may become irrelevant or decline in importance if residents of Taiwan do not feel threatened in their identity or security. Recognizing the legitimacy of a Taiwan nation in this perspective would deserve the support of Chinese who advocate democracy because it serves as a constant reminder that democracy is compatible with societies with a Chinese cultural heritage. Conversely, Chinese who favor the prospect of a China that includes Taiwan may want to ponder how much the democratization of China would make their goal more attainable and at a much lower cost.

9

The Failure of Ideologies in China's Relations with Tibetans

Gray Tuttle

This chapter considers China's relations with Tibet, one of the most intractable problems faced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its minority nationalities policy. Among the fifty-five minority nationalities that are recognized by Chinese officials, Tibetans come the closest to constituting a sub-state nation seeking self-determination. Like all the other groups discussed in this book, Tibetans have made demands for the protection of their language, way of life, and culture. But in this case, religion has played a major role in Tibetan national identity, and, as this chapter argues, has represented a central element of Tibetan-Chinese relations for decades, even before the CCP took power. In addition, the Chinese state, under both the Republican regime and under the CCP since 1949, has made many promises to the Tibetans that, for the most part, have not been kept.

THE CREATION OF TIBETAN NATIONALISM

Since this volume focuses on the instability of multinational states, it is especially appropriate to consider the issue of Tibet as a part of China. Like the long struggles of Palestinians and Kurds, the Tibetan sub-state nationalist movement has proven to be an enduring international issue in the contemporary era. While the Chinese state has asserted the primacy

My thanks to André Laliberté, Robbie Barnett, Sarah Jacoby, Katherine Kerr, and anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions they provided to improve this chapter. The conclusions and any errors are, of course, my own. Thanks to Thierry Dodin for permission to reprint the map from www.TibetInfoNet.com.

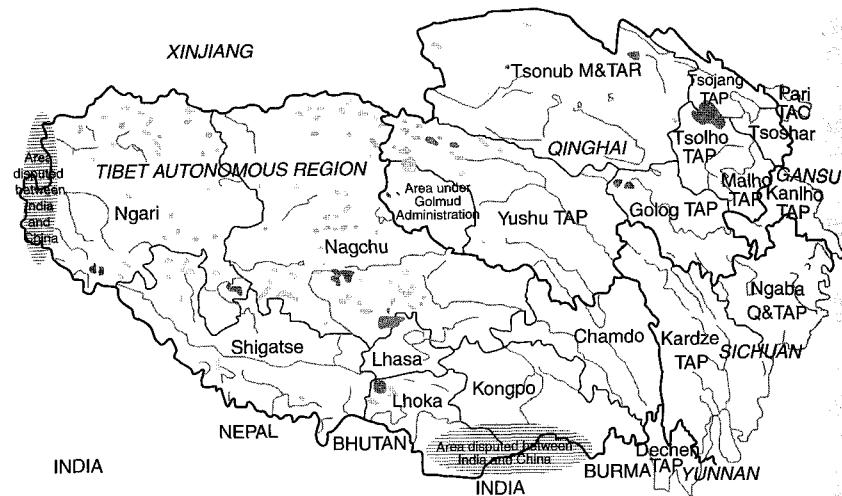


FIGURE 9.1. Tibetan autonomous units of government in the People's Republic of China. Base map from TibetInfoNet: http://www.tibetinfo.net/static/map_of_tibet

of a unitary nation-state, the strong tradition of an independent narrative history of Tibet largely revolving around its distinct religio-political system (as well as the de facto Tibetan independence from 1912 to 1951) has provided a powerful intellectual resource for the current Tibetan nationalist movement. The fact that some 50 percent of Chinese territory has traditionally been dominated by non-Han Chinese people has also lent some strength to this sub-state nationalism. One quarter of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is formally recognized as being under Tibetan autonomous control (see map, Figure 9.1).¹ Tibetans are recognized by the Chinese state as a nationality with legal rights within and beyond these autonomous divisions, although their ability to enforce these rights is very limited (Fiskesjö 2006, pp. 33–4 on the 1984 Law of Regional Nationality [=Minority] Autonomy). For this reason, it would be too strong a claim to say that Tibetans have been totally denied any ethnic accommodation, at least compared to groups like the Kurds in Turkey.

¹ Aside from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, large portions of Qinghai and Sichuan provinces, as well as smaller portions of Gansu and Yunnan Province, are designated as autonomous Tibetan divisions, and together these autonomous areas make up around 25 percent of the People's Republic of China (PRC), an area roughly the size of western Europe or the American southwest.

Although it is seldom acknowledged in the West, the Chinese party-state arguably has done more to create a unified sub-state Tibetan national movement than any amount of exile activity could ever have accomplished. First, the introduction of Chinese armed forces and Communist reforms, as well as the influx of Chinese into Tibet since 1951, have given the diverse and historically divided peoples now called Tibetans an "other" against whom to define themselves. Second, the Chinese state classification of Tibetans (*Zangzu*) as a single ethnic group (*minzu*) has given this formerly fragmented group a more cohesive sense of identity. The Communist Chinese created this identity and enforced it through various state mechanisms (governance, education, etc.), but then tried to limit regional autonomy (*zizhi qu*) to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) (*Xizang zizhi qu*), while asking the majority of Tibetans to submit to other provincial authorities in areas dominated by Han Chinese (Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan). Given the history of nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*) in China, it is hardly surprising that Chinese-educated Tibetans aspire to have an ethnic regional autonomy that embraces all the areas inhabited by ethnic Tibetans.

Remarkably, Tibetans were so divided prior to 1950 that they did not have a single term that referred to all Tibetan people, especially not one that was acceptable to eastern Tibetans. While today some Tibetans in eastern Tibet might willingly call themselves "Bömi" (*bod mi*) or, less likely, "Böpa" (*bod pa*), such terms historically meant people from central Tibet, a region at the center of the current TAR, including Lhasa, Shigatsé, and parts of Lhoka and Kongpo (see Figure 9.1; Tsering Shakya 1993, p. 9). In fact, at the beginning of the Tibetan popular nationalist movement in 1957, no term could be agreed upon by all of those whom we today call "Tibetans," so they called themselves simply "tsampa eaters" as this conveyed a distinct sense of their shared identity (as opposed to the Chinese "rice eaters"), without privileging any one regional designation (Knaus 1999, 145). However, this food-based designation did not endure, and the armed Tibetan resistance movement that lasted from 1957 to the early 1970s was soon known by a regionally specific name: "Four Rivers, Six Ranges (*chu bzhi sgang drug*)," which describes only the region of Kham, and definitely not all of ethnic or even all of eastern Tibet, and reflects the dominance of Khampa Tibetans in the resistance (Tsering Shakya 1999, pp. 66–7). Despite these internal differences, the Chinese chose not to make separate nationalities for Khampas and Amdowas because they saw Tibetans as one nationality.

Although paying attention to the details of the generation of a Tibetan ethnonym may seem tedious to those who don't know Tibetan or Chinese, the creation of a single term for all Tibetans has been crucial in shaping Tibetan resistance to the Chinese state. The spread of modern education, with its key role of creating citizens for the state, has had a significant impact on Tibetan youth since the late 1970s, when modern secular education became available for many Tibetans for the first time in history.² Tibetans were instructed that an ethnicity is defined by having a shared territory; language (at least in written form, as with Chinese and Tibetan), economy; and "psychological nature" (i.e., culture, including religion).³ Given this ideological formulation, it seems likely that the situation might have been the same in Tibetan areas as Michael Coleman found for the schooling that the British imposed on the Irish from the 1820s to the 1920s: that it "may actually have stimulated Irish nationalism" (Coleman 2007, p. 241). The shift toward a single term for Tibetan was one essential element of pan-Tibetan nationalism that could be best inculcated through state education; it was part of learning to be a citizen. To illustrate this point, Tibetans in exile (only some 2 percent of the Tibetan population in any case) have generally already embraced this term as an ethnonym applicable to all Tibetans regardless of regional origin. However, even aside from those in exile, it is exceptional that some young PRC Tibetans today are probably the first in history to have embraced the previously regional-specific terms *Böpa* or *Bömi* (*bod mi*) as self-descriptive for Tibetans from all over the Tibetan plateau, including those from the eastern Tibetan regions (Amdo and Kham).⁴ Previously, terms such as *Böpa* or *Bömi* (*bod mi*) would only have been used to describe people from central Tibet (near Lhasa and Shigatsé for instance).

Thus Tibetans' status as ethnic Tibetans, *Zangzu* in Chinese, is equated with being Tibetan, literally *Börik* (*bod rigs*, also *bod mi rigs*). For some Tibetans, these terms seem to have become synonymous, even in eastern Tibet, with terms that used to be reserved for central Tibetans

² On the role of mass campaigns in spreading such ideas from the 1950s, see Makley (2007, pp. 79–81).

³ For more on CCP policy on nationalities, and its Leninist-Stalinist origins, see Dreyer (1976) and Harrell (1995).

⁴ Zhang (1998 [1993]: 1852) gives just such a typical Chinese state definition of *Bod rigs*. This dictionary, a more or less "official" project of the state, also does not define *bod pa* or *bod mi*, almost as if these were unacceptable terms, at least in the 1980s, when the dictionary was last revised. This date of the 1980s is based on the fact that the entry on *bod rigs* gives the Tibetan population as 3.9 million, which accords with the 1982 census.

(*bod pa*).⁵ This would be equivalent to Southerners in the United States being comfortable being called "Yankees." Even as late as 1994, I heard older Tibetans from the Gansu part of eastern Tibet (Amdo), who were most likely not raised in modern secular schools, refuse to allow themselves to be designated as "Böpa." On the other hand, the broadening adoption of such previously regionally specific terms may simply be the result of the need for unity in the face of the Chinese majority finally overriding a sense of loyalty to regional designations (Sperling 1994, p. 277).⁶

In addition to adopting the Chinese state's conception of Tibetans as a unified group to challenge the state, Tibetan sub-state nationalists in the PRC "often use rhetoric that is part of a vocabulary common to both Chinese Marxism and anti-colonial movements in general," such as calling Communist China "Imperialist" (Sperling 1994, p. 278). This follows a long trend of Chinese-educated Tibetans using the nationalist forms to which they were introduced by modern Chinese education to argue against the Chinese state's failure to deliver on promises made to Tibetans.⁷

CHINESE PROMISES AND TIBETAN HOPES

The role of the Chinese state in actually generating a pan-Tibetan identity and thus the basis for Tibetan sub-state nationalism creates a challenging trajectory for China's efforts at dislodging such nationalism. It is obvious that if China fails to better accommodate the Tibetans, there seems no way short of the imposition of martial law to suppress this movement. It is hardly surprising that such efforts to suppress dissent, like U.S. efforts to quell the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, seem to generate even more resistance. Of course, there is one significant difference: there is no armed Tibetan resistance, but instead mainly civic protest.

While martial law was imposed for a time after the demonstrations of the late 1980s, the Chinese state dismantled this regime fairly quickly (by

⁵ For instance, see the young Tibetan students who use the term when talking to a Tibetan from the exiled community, Kalsang Dolma, in the 2004 film, *Ce qu'il reste de nous* (*What Remains of Us*), produced by François Prévost, written and directed by François Prévost and Hugo Latulippe. Others, especially people who spend time in Kham, say that Khampa people still refuse to use these overarching terms for Tibetans.

⁶ For some of the specific terms in actual use, see Sperling (1994) and Gayley (forthcoming).

⁷ See Tuttle (2005, pp. 147–55) for earlier instances of Tibetan efforts to push the Chinese state to live up to its own rhetoric on Tibetan affairs.

1990) and shifted strategies: first, China incorporated as many Tibetan elite as possible in the state's labor pool, and second the government made a new promise to broaden the benefits of inclusion in the Chinese state to all Tibetans (in principle) through the plan to "Develop the West" (*xi bu da kai fa*).⁸ In short, this campaign poured money into Tibet, mostly for infrastructure projects, and the effects were felt throughout the Tibetan economy. By 2001, over 100,000 Tibetans in the TAR alone worked in state-owned units and were paid salaries higher than those of state workers at equivalent levels in Beijing and only surpassed by those in Shanghai (Fischer 2005, pp. 113–115). This number would be much higher if one included all of the various Tibetan autonomous areas, since the TAR is home to less than half of the Tibetan population.⁹ Likewise in the TAR, over 600 representatives of religious groups (abbots, incarnate lamas, and so forth) occupied government positions at the provincial level and below, often with a salary but not much responsibility (Hillman 2005, p. 36), and this number too would be much higher if it included all Tibetans in the PRC. These elite Tibetans clearly benefited from the state support granted to them. However, for the majority of Tibetans the promise of a better future as part of the PRC is centered on the ongoing Develop the West plan, which is supposed to improve Tibet's overall economic prospects.

Today the Tibetan areas within the PRC are among the very poorest in China by any measure and are on a par with the poorest areas in the world (Fischer 2005, p. 119). Yet the Chinese state and average Chinese citizens who know anything about Tibet seem very frustrated that Tibetans do not recognize "everything that the state has done" to develop Tibet. It is certainly true that modern infrastructural developments (roads, electricity, modern schools, and hospitals) were almost entirely introduced to Tibet after the Chinese takeover. And in recent decades, there have been dramatic improvements on all these fronts (Fischer 2005). However, the poverty is extreme, and between 1999 and 2001 "over a third of rural households [over three-quarters of all Tibetans live in rural areas] in both

⁸ For more on this campaign, see Tibet Information Network (2000); Lai (2002); Goodman (2004); Holbig (2004); Tian (2004).

⁹ In 1965 there were only 7,508 Tibetan cadres, and this number had grown to at least 29,406 in 1986; see Tsering Shakya (1999, p. 390). For fuller details, including a much larger number of cadre in Tibet, see Conner and Barnett (1997). My thanks to Robbie Barnett for sharing an electronic copy of this out-of-print book with me. Unlike this latter work, I treat any institution that is sponsored by the PRC government as part of the government, and do not limit the use of this term to the executive bodies that directly exercise power in the PRC.

the TAR and Qinghai were either in poverty, or else just marginally above it" (Fischer 2005, p. 108).¹⁰

It is clear that development has been driven by the priorities of the Chinese state and not by local interests. In fact, "most outside government funding is being spent on the state itself, either directly through government administration, or indirectly on state-owned units" (Fischer 2005, p. 77).¹¹ For instance, the costs of the high-tech train to Tibet that started to operate in July of 2006 were more than three and half times what the Chinese state spent on all health and education measures in the TAR from 1952 to 2002 (US \$4.1 vs. \$1.16 billion).¹² To put this into perspective, China spent US \$3.8 billion just to build a new terminal at the Beijing international airport to impress visitors coming for the Olympic games; it is the largest building in the world.¹³ When the Chinese state is willing to spend three times more funds to erect a single building in Beijing than it is to improve the health care and education of Tibetans in the TAR over a half century, Chinese at home and abroad should not be surprised that Tibetans and their supporters are critical of state claims of substantial financial support for Tibet. Tibetan health care costs have skyrocketed (up 75 percent in Qinghai from 1997 to 2001) and the growth of education spending has slowed since 2001 (Fischer 2005, pp. 48–9). Even Chinese state-supported scholarship on Tibet recognizes that according to the internationally accepted Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI), which measures infant mortality, life expectancy, and adult literacy rate: "(the PQLI for) Tibet's population and the Tibetan population in the country[side]...are not only lower than the world average, but also lower than the average for Asian countries. They are 29 percentage points lower than the national average of China."¹⁴ If Tibetans had truly been consulted about how funds should be spent in Tibet, it is

¹⁰ This percentage is also accepted by the Chinese authorities, see Zheng (2001, p. 501).

¹¹ While the Tibetan elite who work for the government benefit from these state funds, this represents less than 5 percent of all Tibetans, even assuming some 200,000 Tibetans work for the state.

¹² International Campaign for Tibet (2003, p. 44), citing the Chinese state's *Tibetan Statistical Yearbook 2001*; International Campaign for Tibet (2007, p. 30), citing the Chinese state's *China Daily*, Oct. 15, 2005. Zheng (2001, pp. 492–3) noted that from 1950 to 1990, the Chinese government had transferred over 25 billion yuan in grants, construction investments and industrial goods to Tibet, but he did not specify how much of this was spent on education and health, as opposed to roads, airports, barracks, and other infrastructure essential to the military occupation of Tibet.

¹³ See Barboza, D. (2008). Going All Out for the Games. *The New York Times*. May 2.

¹⁴ Zhang (1997, p. 120). This work also discussed education and health care in Tibet without listing expenditures in these fields.

almost certain that they would have requested further development of education and health services, which are totally inadequate at present, as opposed to this train-line, which reduces the time (compared to road travel) or cost (compared to flights) of travel by a modest amount simply for the relatively few Tibetans who use it.

All of these issues point to the fact that the Chinese state continues to make promises to minority nationalities in general, and Tibetans in particular, but fails to fully deliver on these promises. In a social contract, if the more powerful party constantly changes the terms of the agreement, it is hardly surprising that the other party dissents. Over the course of decades of failed promises, the Tibetan people, who probably have more of a voice now (even with all the current restrictions in the PRC) than they had prior to Communist rule, are exercising the very rights that China's constitution and education system has taught them they should have. In the context of a failing social contract that the Chinese and Tibetans have negotiated, such dissent should be taken as an opportunity to correct course and restore the terms.¹⁵

STEPPING BACK TO THINK AHEAD: PAST SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES

It is useful to look to the past to learn from prior failures when trying to gain some perspective on more recent events, the effects of which are still unfolding.¹⁶ This is especially true when considering the events of March and April 2008 when Tibetan demonstrations, and at least one event that can be characterized as a riot, made world headlines as China prepared to host the summer Olympics.

In the first two decades of the modern Chinese nation-state from 1912 to 1933, the failure of secularization policies led the Chinese state to reconsider its relations with Tibet. Thus, by the 1930s and 1940s, relations between Chinese and Tibetans had been reconfigured more along religious lines that were acceptable to Tibetans. Similarly, the demonstrations in the spring of 2008 were the culmination of two decades of

¹⁵ This idea of a contractual relationship between the Chinese state and the Tibetan people comes from a presentation given by Robert Barnett at an event entitled "Will the Tibetans Follow the Kosovars: Special Roundtable on the Events in Tibet," Association for the Study of Nationalities, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, April 11, 2008 and chaired by André Laliberté.

¹⁶ See Tuttle (2005) for additional background on some of the figures and events described below. Excerpts here are printed with permission of Columbia University Press.

misguided policy that followed the last wave of Tibetan demonstrations in 1987 and 1988. The policy outcomes of the 2008 demonstrations have yet to be determined, but a look back to the past may be helpful in imagining possibilities for the future.

The secularization of government in early-twentieth-century China at first blush appeared to have been an unmitigated success. In China, the main role of religion in the middle and late Qing period is most commonly understood as providing a messianic outlet for the frustrations of rural society, from the White Lotus rebellions at the turn of the late 1700s to the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864). Communism would later channel much of these energies with its own promises of salvation. Work by Qing scholars (Crossley 1999; Naquin 2000; Rawski 1998) has demonstrated what a vital role religion played in the life of the empire and the imperial family. But Republican leaders of China lost this vital mediator between state and society when they adopted the modernist secular policies of the Western nation-state as their model. From 1912 to 1933, China very nearly ruptured the historic basis for relations with Inner Asia, especially Tibet. While military might had been critical to Qing rule of Inner Asia, the religiously inflected ideological underpinnings of Qing emperorship, as outlined by the recent works mentioned above, were crucial factors in allowing the threat of military force to rest lightly on the subject territories as well as on the imperial finances. Likewise, while a military occupation of Tibet was critical to the Chinese Communist incorporation of what had been a *de facto* independent state for decades, real rule of Tibet has more often depended on the cooperation of the Tibetan elite with the CCP (see Fisher 2005; Goldstein et al. 2008; Hillman 2005; Tsering Shakya 1999).

In the past, one of the most critical religious roles the Qing emperors played (some better than others) was as patrons of Tibetan Buddhism. This patronage was essential state policy as Tibetan Buddhists (both ethnic Tibetans and Mongols) inhabited roughly one-half of the Qing dynasty's domains. Yet with the secularization of the government after the 1911 Revolution, for the first two decades of the Chinese Republic the role of patron of Tibetan Buddhism was basically relinquished by the leaders of China. It is no coincidence that Tibetans' current claims for an independent state focus their attention on this period. With no patrons among the rulers of China – as there had been consistently in the Yuan and Qing, and intermittently in the Ming – the Tibetan elite had no incentive to become a part of the newly conceived secular Chinese nation-state.

In Nationalist China (1927–1949), the National Government (*Minguo zhengfu*) initially pursued only political, and not religious, ways of relating to the Tibetans. The ideologies of nationalism and racial unity were central to the government's efforts to work with exiled Tibetans to resolve what the government saw as the problem of Tibet's independence. Some Tibetans, like the 9th Panchen Lama and Norlha Qutughtu, who had both been driven out of Tibet by the centralization efforts of the 13th Dalai Lama, chose to embrace these modern ideas and tried to implement them in Tibetan regions. However, in the late 1930s the Chinese government failed to live up to the dual promise of such rhetoric: national autonomy and racial equality. This failure destroyed Chinese hopes of employing secular ideologies of nationalism and race to incorporate Tibet. Instead, when these secular ideologies failed to engender Tibetan cooperation, Chinese officials were eventually forced to embrace religion in an effort to include Tibet within the modern Chinese nation-state. While contemporary China has to some degree incorporated Tibetan Buddhist religion in its efforts to maintain a stable government in Tibet, the repeated Chinese Communist promises of autonomy (enshrined in various constitutions and statutes and the subject of a great deal of rhetoric) and the more recent promise of economic development (equality in a manner that really counts) have not been fulfilled.

Under the leadership of the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*), the Northern Expedition seized power in central and northern China in 1927–1928, replacing the Beijing government with the National Government in Nanjing. After the death of Yuan Shikai, the old Beijing government focused its concerns mainly on retaining power in North China. In contrast, the new administration envisioned centralized rule of all China, including the former frontier territories of the Qing Empire. Through the party-state system and a rational reorganization of the government structure, the Nationalist Party led a government more unified than China had seen for decades. Sun Yat-sen's work, especially the Three Principles of the People, was elevated to the guiding ideology of the new state. In the process, the early Republican idea of the unity of the five races (*wuzhugonghe*) was replaced by a Sino-centric (Han chauvinist) nationalism. This shift was marked by such signs as the replacement of the five-barred flag of the Beijing government (with each color representing one of the central "races" of China) with the National Government's flag featuring a white sun on a blue and red background. Nevertheless, the Nanjing administration continued to find multiracial rhetoric useful when dealing with the borderland peoples outside of its control.

Inclusion of Tibetans in the Chinese administration, though part of the multiracial rhetoric of the Chinese Republic from its early years, only started to become a reality in the late 1920s. Initially, the context of these early-twentieth-century Tibetan exiles' understanding of nationalism predisposed them to oppose such modern ideologies. For the Tibetan Buddhist leaders of small polities on the borders of central Tibet, the arrival of nationalism in their homeland constituted a particular challenge. From 1913, the Lhasa government embarked on a program of state building characterized by a strong centralized administration. Backed by a British-armed military, the thirteenth Dalai Lama Tupten Gyatso (Thubstan rgya mtsho, 1876–1933) refused to accommodate the interests of lamas accustomed to local autonomy and ousted those who resisted the imposition of the nascent Tibetan nation-state's power.¹⁷ Thus, when Tibetans went into exile in China, they were wary of the ideologies that would subordinate their interests as the centralizing Tibetan administration had done.

Partially to circumvent this resistance from Tibet's traditional elite, the Chinese government developed educational institutions to train Tibetan youth in the prevailing secular ideologies, a practice that would be greatly developed under Communist rule. The record shows an acceptance of parts of Sun Yat-sen's principles by some Tibetans. However, the Chinese government's refusal to give real political positions to these Chinese-educated Tibetans or to grant even regional autonomy to Tibetans in the Kham (*Xikang*) region demonstrated to the Tibetans that promises of real autonomy (implied in the ideology of Sun Yat-sen) were only rhetoric (Goldstein 2004, pp. 7–21; Stoddard 1985, pp. 69–94; Tuttle 2005, pp. 147–55). Of course, even if the Chinese government had supported these Chinese-educated Tibetans from the borderlands, they would have had little influence on the religious center of Tibetan culture in Lhasa.¹⁸

In the early 1930s, the Republican Chinese government only gained effective and influential support from prominent Tibetans when the National Government recognized the religious, as well as the political, roles of Tibetan lamas exiled in China. Despite their eventual cooperation with Chinese politicians, these exiled Tibetans were also pursuing their own goals. In order to return to their previous positions of power

¹⁷ For details on this, see Tuttle (2005, pp. 51–6).

¹⁸ By contrast, the Chinese Communists were later to pursue a different approach, at least in dealing with Central Tibetans, by reaching an accommodation with the Tibetan government in Lhasa in 1951, as the Seventeen Point Agreement effectively granted very real autonomy to Central Tibet. See Goldstein (1989, pp. 763–72).

in Tibet, they sought the financial and military backing that only the Chinese government could provide (Tuttle 2005, pp. 132–5, 183–92). In fact, as religious figures cooperating with the Chinese government, they established an important pattern for the future of Sino-Tibetan relations. As is still the case today, Chinese politicians were drawn to work with the religious leaders of Tibet to try to maintain control over the populace in the region (Hillman 2005). At the same time, these Tibetans invented and adapted strategies for dealing with the new challenges of a globalized world. For instance, they dealt with Chinese government ideology by judiciously employing the government's multiracial or nationalist rhetoric when addressing the Chinese. However, there is little indication that this rhetoric made much of an impact on the lives or thoughts of the leading Tibetan lamas exiled in China.¹⁹ Successful dialogue with the Chinese government only came after 1931 when the National Government embraced the dual religious and political system that these lamas represented. Until that time, the effort to engage prominent Tibetans solely as political figures who could be included in a secular Chinese nation-state set the stage for the substantive Sino-Tibetan dialogue that followed in the 1930s.

The Communist People's Republic of China (PRC) went through a similar cycle as the Nationalist Republic of China. Initially, with the advice of Chinese who had lived in Tibet in the 1920s and 1930s, the government, recognizing the very different state and social structure in Tibet, granted central Tibet real autonomy, as outlined in the Seventeen Point Agreement of 1951 (the only such agreement made with any nationality that became part of the PRC).²⁰ But from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the PRC (like the Guomindang before them) tried to follow secular policies in Tibet. As with the Guomindang, after two decades they recognized that this policy had failed. The Communist government has also realized, as the popular saying goes, "a month of talking by a government cadre is not worth one word uttered by a lama" (Hillman 2005, p. 40). Therefore, some elements within the Chinese state returned to a model of patronage, at least for some prominent monasteries and lamas. There is strong evidence that since the reforms of the late 1970s, Chinese government leaders, especially on the local level, have again cultivated connections

¹⁹ For further elaborations on this impact, see Tuttle (2005, pp. 139–47; 2008). For a different interpretation of the impact of these ideas on the Panchen Lama, see Jagou (2004, pp. 139–66).

²⁰ See Goldstein (1989, pp. 763–72) for details. As the Chinese dissident Song Liming (1998: 59) said: "If China had sovereignty over Tibet before 1951, why did China need to conclude the Seventeen Point Agreement?"

with local monastery leaders similar to past patronage relations (Hillman 2005, pp. 44–9). The state has also tried to train patriotic lamas with varying degrees of success. Most recently, the PRC has enshrined the institution of incarnate lamas in new legal framework.

Tibetans in exile and their supporters decry such policies, but the real surprise is that a Communist state would ever allow, much less embrace, such traditions. This illustrates very well the success the Tibetans have had in asserting the relevance of their cultural standards into the Chinese vision of how Tibet should be governed, especially the joining of religion and politics (*chos srid zung 'brel*), the bedrock of Tibetan social ideology.²¹ Of course, Tibetans have cause for concern, since non-believers who get involved in this Tibetan Buddhist tradition obviously do not have the same stake in the legitimacy of the selection of incarnations. But inasmuch as the state still allows Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders to direct this process, it is a remarkable testament to the endurance of a tradition that flies in the face of the declared ideology of a strictly secular state. A genuine respect for Tibetan culture, which necessarily includes religion, has been and remains critical to China's most successful policies toward Tibet. Accepting Tibetan Buddhist religion means accepting its role in politics, which is very different than the secular model that was adopted in China through Marxist-Leninist ideology. This approach also harkens back to policies that worked for the dynasties that ruled China from the thirteenth century and proves as true today as it did in the early twentieth century.

HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF CHINA'S CONTRACT WITH THE TIBETANS

For eighty years the regime type has not changed in China, which has been ruled by an authoritarian party-state since the Nationalists took Beijing in 1928 (Kirby 2000, 2004). There has been remarkable continuity between the Nationalist and Communist party-states in terms of the approach to borderland peoples. The most important aspect of this continuity is that the Han Chinese majority has consistently made unilateral

²¹ See McCartney (2007). "China tells living Buddhas to obtain permission before they reincarnate." *The Times* [Online] (Updated August 4, 2007). Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article2194682.ece> [accessed June 17, 2008]; and International Campaign for Tibet (2007, pp. 10–13, 89–98). On the joining of religion and politics, see Ruegg (1995); Dung dkar Blo bzang phrin las (1991). For specific information on the Chinese state embracing this notion in the Republican period, see Tuttle (2005, pp. 160–92).

decisions about policies that affect other nationalities that they have defined as being included within the Chinese state.

The earliest promise of real autonomy made to the Inner Asian peoples was the 1922 manifesto of the (then powerless) CCP, which "proclaimed Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkistan [Xinjiang] to be autonomous states (*pang*) and envisioned their voluntary unification with China proper in a Chinese Federated Republic" (Dreyer 1976, p. 63). Sun Yat-sen's declaration of the Guomindang platform in 1924 echoed this sentiment: "We hereby repeat solemnly that we recognize the right of self-determination for all peoples in China, and that a free united Republic of China based upon the principles of free alliance of the different peoples will be established after the fall of imperialism and militarism" (Smith 1996, p. 326). This platform was clearly incorporated, at least for the Tibetans and the Mongolians, in "the 1925 draft constitution [which] gave a right of Mongolia and Tibet to have separate governance, and separate constitutions, as long as these did not conflict with that of the Republic" (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 21).

Shortly thereafter, in 1931 the Communists in Jiangxi drew up a constitution that offered ethnic groups even more latitude in relation to the Han Chinese. The constitution stated:

The Soviet Government of China recognizes the right of self-determination of the national minorities of China, their right to complete self-determination from China and to the formation of an independent state for each national minority. All Mongols, Muslims [Hui], Tibetans, Miao, Yao, Koreans, and others living in the territory of China shall enjoy the full right of self-determination, i.e., they may either join the Union of Chinese Soviets or secede from it and form their own state as they prefer. (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 26)

This was again reinforced in May 1935, when the CCP leader at that time issued the declaration: "the basic policy of the CCP and the Chinese Soviet government toward national minorities is to recognize unconditionally their right of national self-determination, namely the political right to be independent and free, should they wish, from the oppressor nationality, i.e. the Han nationality" (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 26). Then in 1938, Mao himself spoke of "equal rights ... given to the various nationalities in the country, under the principle of their own volition to unite and establish a united government" (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 27). In Mao's statement we see the presumption that the decision will favor joining with the Chinese state. In all these statements we can detect traces of Sun Yat-sen's "kingly way" (*wang dao*). Sun had asserted that the Chinese race/nation

(*minzu*) had been created naturally through the kingly way, while the state had been created through military force. Following the logic that a race/nation must coalesce naturally without the introduction of force, Tibetans would be expected to *agree* to join the Chinese Republic.²²

Ultimately, Asian studies have neglected the fact that both the Nationalist and Communist parties insisted that Tibet become a part of China by choice, and not through force. But ignoring almost three decades of persuasive rhetoric on the part of the Chinese limits our ability to understand why the Tibetans made some of the choices they did. Sun's follower and the leader of the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek, embraced the same idea in the 1940s publication of *China's Destiny* (*Zhongguo zhi ming yun*), where he stated, with regard to "the Chinese nation ... at no time has it used military force to expand" (Chiang 1947, p. 29). We also clearly see the paternalism associated with this sort of view in his 1945 speech on National Independence and Racial Equality:

As regards the political status of Tibet, the Sixth National Kuomintang Congress decided to grant it a very high degree of autonomy, to aid its political advancement and to improve the living conditions of the Tibetans. I solemnly declare that if the Tibetans should at this time express a wish for self-government, our Government would, in conformity with our sincere tradition, accord it a very high degree of autonomy. If in the future they fulfill the economic requirement for independence, the National Government will, as in the case of Outer Mongolia, help them to gain that status. But Tibet must give proof that it can consolidate its independent position and protect its continuity so as not to become another Korea. (Chiang 1946)²³

All of the above statements were made in the absence of any control over Tibet, so in this sense they were promises made to attract not just the Tibetans, few of whom probably ever heard them, but also other borderland peoples with whom both the Communists first and the Nationalists soon after found themselves living when they had been pushed to the frontiers of China proper (in Yan'an and Chongqing, respectively).

Much more significant for the Tibetans were the negotiations of late 1950 and early 1951. These negotiations decided the specific ways in which the Chinese state was willing to accommodate the de facto independent state of Tibet in order to gain the Tibetan government's legal

²² See Sun Yat-sen (1929, pp. 6–8). Even the Communists kept up this strategy, as Tibet was the only region of the former Qing empire which signed an agreement, albeit at gunpoint, with the Communist government.

²³ For full reference, Chiang (1946 vol. II, p. 857).

agreement to become part of the modern Chinese state. This was embodied in the Seventeen Point Agreement, signed May 23, 1951, which guaranteed Tibetan autonomy on a number of specific fronts (see Goldstein 1989, pp. 763–72):

Point 3: “the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the leadership of Central People’s Government”;

Point 4: “central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet”;

Point 7: “religious beliefs, customs, habits of the Tibetan People shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries”;

Points 9 & 10: “school education of the Tibetan nationality ... [and] the people’s livelihood shall be improved step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet”;

Point 11: regarding “matters related to the various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities.”

These were significant concessions if, as the Chinese state and Chinese nationalists around the world like to argue today, Tibet has been an inalienable part of Chinese territory since the thirteenth century.²⁴ But more significant for the Tibetans and their place in China today is the fact that “the Communists, after taking power in 1949, cancelled the promise they had made early on, in the 1930s ... the explicit right to formal secession [for borderland polities]” (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 18). Once this right was taken away from Tibetans, the Chinese state proceeded to implement

²⁴ For instance see the YouTube video, posted March 15, 2008: “Tibet WAS, IS, and ALWAYS WILL BE a part of China”. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9QNKB34cJo> [accessed 19 June 2008], which has received over 3 million hits in its first four months online. For an official view see the article “China publishes historical records that show Tibet an inalienable part of country.” *Xinhua* [Online]. (Updated April 8, 2008). Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-04/08/content_7935999.htm [accessed June 17, 2008]. This article describes a new China’s State Archives Administration website, which supposedly used “historical records that showed Tibet had been under jurisdiction of the central government for more than 700 years since the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368).” However, the first two documents are concerned with other matters. The first addresses religious freedom in Tibet by citing two 1950s telegrams from the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to Mao Zedong stating that the CCP “has implemented the policy of freedom of religious belief” in Tibet. The second set of documents (sales contracts of serfs, 1914–1943) addresses the principle justification for China’s current rule of Tibet: that Tibet was a feudal society that needed to be liberated. Ironically, the latter documents clearly demonstrate that China did not have control of Tibet at the time they were written, or it would not have permitted such transactions. Or see the state archives site at: <http://www.saac.gov.cn/> [accessed April 11, 2009]. These sites were all responses to the Tibetan demonstrations of March and April 2008, and the ensuing support for Tibetans expressed around the world.

reforms in Tibetan areas outside of where the Lhasa government controlled in 1950. This led quickly to an open revolt in Kham and Amdo in the mid-1950s, which spread to central Tibet by 1959. It is remarkable how little has been written about the Tibetan uprisings in eastern Tibet in the 1950s, but the Chinese state has been systematic in preventing publications and research on this topic in Tibetan regions. This sensitivity about events already half a century past shows just how tense relations still are between Chinese and Tibetans in eastern Tibet, as the events of the spring of 2008 also demonstrate. In any case, once the revolt spread to central Tibet, the Dalai Lama fled into exile and both parties reneged on the Seventeen Point Agreement.²⁵

The next significant milestone in the trajectory of Chinese accommodation of Tibetan sub-state nationality interests came only after the end of the Cultural Revolution, when General Secretary Hu Yaobang went to Tibet on May 22, 1980, to celebrate the 39th anniversary of the Seventeen Point Agreement. On May 29, he made a speech to thousands of party cadre in Lhasa outlining six tasks, the first of which was: “To exercise nationality autonomy in the region fully – that is to say, to let Tibetans really be the masters of their own lives” (Wang 1994, p. 287). Even more remarkably, Hu went on to both accept blame, on behalf of the party, and to place blame especially on the Chinese cadre in Tibet for the failures of the Chinese party-state up to that point, as quoted and analyzed by Tsering Shakya:

“We feel our party has let the Tibetan people down. We feel very bad! The sole purpose of our Communist Party is to work for the happiness of the people, to do good things for them. We have worked nearly thirty years, but the life of the Tibetan people has not notably improved. Are we not to blame? The harshest words were reserved for the Chinese cadre working in Tibet. He asked what they had done with the millions of yuan in grants the Central Government had made to the TAR ... comparing the situation in Tibet with colonialism. (1999, pp. 381–2)

Other points in his speech pledged new economic policies to benefit Tibetans and a renewed openness to Tibetan culture (clearly including religion), language, and education (Tsering Shakya 1999, pp. 381–2). This elevated rhetoric looked, for a time, like it might be backed up with action. Already in January of 1980, a new law was promised, one which

²⁵ Song (1998, p. 65) asserts that “the Tibetan government ... repudiated the agreement in 1959, while the Chinese government still regards it as legal,” though the government is clearly not honoring the agreement.

would at last “realise the right to autonomy” for Tibetans, which had been an unfulfilled promise since 1967 (Tsering Shakya 1999, p. 391). These changes were finally made in 1982 in the constitution, which asserted that:

Regional autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy... The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.²⁶

Since the Chinese constitution is not a legally enforceable document, in 1984 these rights were defined in the Law of Regional Autonomy, among other statutes (Fiskesjö 2006, p. 34; Tsering Shakya 1999, p. 291). But as is well known in the Tibetan case, once the demonstrations of 1987–1989 took place, Hu’s policies were stopped, martial law was enacted, and the hardliners have resisted making substantial concessions to accommodating Tibetan sub-state nationality interests ever since.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS AND THE SPRING OF 2008

The most significant new promise the Chinese state has made to Tibetans – along with other peoples on the old frontiers of the Qing Empire that were incorporated into the modern state – is the plan to “Develop the West” (*xi bu da kai fa*) announced in 2000. This plan has affected Tibetans across the plateau, though those near large infrastructure projects (mostly in urban areas, but also in some rural areas near train lines, hydroelectric dams, etc.) have obviously been most affected (Fischer 2005, p. 69). Some of the changes are quite remarkable, especially in rural areas, such as the relative ease of transportation (travel times are generally much shorter than they were a decade ago), the growing availability of electricity and the internet, and cellphone coverage better than that in the United States. Nevertheless, in Tibetan regions, “the provinces that account for about three-quarters of the Tibetan population and territory emerged as the leading laggards amidst exceedingly rapid national economic growth” (Fischer 2005, p. 17). Once rural Tibetans have a television, they can see what they do not have, and what

²⁶ Full text: <http://english.people.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html> [accessed April 11, 2009].

they can access only with great difficulty and tremendous shifts in their ways of life (Goldstein et al. 2008). The grand promises have remained unrealized while the unfulfilled vision of a better life seems to have only frustrated many Tibetans, especially the youth. Earlier generations know that life is better now than under the harsh political campaigns of the past, but anyone born after 1980 has grown up with the constant promise of a better life, especially a financially better life, since the oldest of them were twenty years old when the plan to “Develop the West” was announced. At the same time, the influx of workers with greater economic empowerment who have come to develop Tibet make Tibetans feel acutely aware of being second class citizens in their own autonomous territories (Fischer 2005, pp. 133–49). Thus this most recent social contract that Chinese have offered the Tibetans, the promise of a booming economy in exchange for a less restive population, has failed to deliver a satisfied Tibetan public.

Thirty years after reforms and almost twenty years since the last major demonstrations in Lhasa, the demonstrations throughout Tibetan regions in the spring of 2008 show that a broad range of Tibetans are dissatisfied with China’s rule. Though it has been difficult to gather reliable information in recent months, both monks and lay people, adults and youth, students and nomads, farmers and urban dwellers – in other words every type of Tibetan – seems to have been involved in the demonstrations. What exactly these Tibetans are dissatisfied with will be hard to discover until and unless the Chinese government lives up to the rights promised in the Chinese constitution:

Article 35. Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.

Article 36. Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief.

Article 41. Citizens of the People’s Republic of China have the right to criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary.

But these freedoms are strongly tempered by another article, which puts the party-state’s interests over the rights promised above.

Article 51. **The exercise by citizens of the People’s Republic of China of their freedoms and rights may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society and of the collective, or upon the lawful freedoms and rights of other citizens.**²⁷

²⁷ Full text: <http://english.people.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>, bold font in the original [accessed April 11, 2009].

As I have argued above, I think that it is in the interest of the state to be able to hear the voice of the Tibetan people, through the exercise of "freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration" and especially "the right to criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary." The restrictions on these freedoms has led the Tibetans, like other peoples in China proper and around the world, to become frustrated, and that pent up frustration did lead to at least one deplorably violent episode, on March 14, 2008 by Tibetan demonstrators reacting to police beating monks, arresting students, and halting a range of nonviolent demonstrations.²⁸

While many in the West regretted and called for an end to the violence in Tibet, the world did not share the same level of outrage as Han Chinese about the attacks on Chinese and Hui (Muslim) and their shops in Lhasa, which included arson and as many as nineteen deaths (whether ethnic Han Chinese, Hui, or Tibetan was not clear, though the majority of them seem to have been deaths by people trapped in the shops set on fire).²⁹ But Chinese people also probably do not feel terrible remorse

²⁸ As frequently noted, ethnic Chinese are responsible for most of violent and non-violent demonstrations in China, amounting to hundreds of thousands of instances before the government stopped reporting the statistics after 2005. See for instance, French (2005) *Anger in China Rises Over Threat to Environment*. *New York Times*, July 19. This author states (2005): "the number of mass protests like these skyrocketing to 74,000 incidents last year from about 10,000 a decade earlier, according to government figures." In early 2006, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security issued a press release that stated that the number of instances of "public order disturbances" (as opposed to mass incidents) had risen to 87,000 in 2005. The Chinese state's own English language newspaper, *China Daily*, has described this ministry report as describing the number of "mass incidents" so the discrepancy between the terms used to describe such incidents seems not to be a major concern to the Chinese state. "China strives to handle mass incidents." *China Daily* [Online] (Updated December 9, 2006). Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-12/09/content_754796.htm. [accessed October 3, 2008]. Many thanks to Andrew Nathan in alerting me to these latest figures and the discussion about how these terms and numbers are understood and often misreported.

²⁹ It would be interesting to know whether the shops that were burned were mostly owned by Chinese and Hui or whether the Tibetans indiscriminately targeted these stores, even when they were owned by Tibetans who were just renting to the other nationalities. Unfortunately, at present, it is extremely difficult to get permission from the Chinese state to do basic research on the Tibetan economy. For an assessment of some of these difficulties see Yeh (2006); for an exception to this rule, see Goldstein et al, (2008). See "13 civilians burned or stabbed to death in Lhasa riot," *Xinhua* [Online]. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/20/content_7826369.htm [accessed June 19, 2008]; "17 jailed for Lhasa violence," *Xinhua* [Online] (Updated April 29, 2008). Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-04/29/content_8073067.htm [accessed June 19, 2008]. I can find no information on the cause of deaths on the Chinese state's English language website on Tibet. The closest reference to the riot that I

about the American soldiers killed in Iraq. They view the soldiers' presence as interference in another country's internal affairs, so they are more sympathetic to the Iraqi deaths.³⁰ And likewise many Westerners have come to feel that the Chinese presence in Tibet also reflects interference with a formerly independent country's internal affairs, so they are more sympathetic to the Tibetans who have been beaten and imprisoned and killed by the Chinese state. (Westerners also probably wrongly assume that all this activity is only being perpetrated by Chinese, which is incorrect, since many Tibetans work for the state, as prison and border guards, undercover police, and in many other positions, including high officials.)

Of course, part of the problem with assessing the level and nature of the violence in Tibet (whether inflicted by Tibetans or Chinese) is that the Chinese state would not allow open access for media coverage of this event, despite promises of media freedom leading up to the Olympics. In fact, in China foreign media (and domestic media in different ways) was and remains (in December, 2009) almost totally restricted in its access to Lhasa and Tibet, except for press visits coordinated by the state. What is so remarkable about these limitations on the press is how widespread they are, covering the entire Tibetan plateau (roughly equal to one quarter of the territory of China).

In the absence of the ability of scholars and journalists to hear openly and directly from Tibetans to gain their perspective, I think that the Tibetans in China are trying to realize the promise of Article 41 of the

could find was a note about tourism resuming after "[t]ourism to Tibet was halted after the March 14 riots" in the article: "Local officials: Lhasa to reopen to foreign tourists soon" [Online] Available at: <http://eng.tibet.cn/> [accessed June 19, 2008]; and a note about unemployment for workers in the tourism industry: "First batch of compensation issued to 3,14 victims in Tibet." [Online] Available at: <http://eng.tibet.cn/>. [accessed June 19, 2008]. The clearest account of the count of the injured and the dead is the article "18 civilians, 1 police officer killed by Lhasa rioters," *People's Daily* [Online] (Updated March 22, 2008) Available at: <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6378824.html>. [accessed January 5, 2008], but this article also does not distinguish between the ethnicities of the dead and injured or the exact causes of the deaths or injuries. A search of the *People's Daily* English edition online brings the reader to a special page that addresses the "Truth behind the March 14 Lhasa Riots" which aims to "Tell You a True Tibet." *People's Daily* [Online]. Available at: <http://english.people.com.cn/90002/93607/index.html>. [accessed January 5, 2008].

³⁰ In fact, the Chinese official website on Tibet had this to say: "The casualty [sic] during the [Lhasa] riots there is far less than that of the daily loss of lives in Iraq." See: Graefin von Borries (2008). "Tibet a ploy to run down China and Olympics," *China Daily* [Online] (Updated June 13, 2008) Available at: http://eng.tibet.cn/news/opinion/200806/t20080613_406244.htm [accessed June 18, 2008]. Though this article for the English language version of China's official Tibet website was written by a non-Chinese, it clearly represents a position of which the Chinese government approves.

Chinese constitution: the right to criticize and make suggestions. When they wave the flag of the Tibetan government in exile and call for a return of the Dalai Lama, they might well be harkening back to the period in which the Dalai Lama still lived in Tibet and the flag still flew in Tibet (until 1959), a period when the Seventeen Point Agreement still meant something and there was real autonomy for the Tibetans (at least those in what was to become the TAR), though I think it is safe to say that no one wants a return to everything as it was in the 1950s. Tibet was not a perfect place in the 1950s, but most Tibetans, and many outside observers believe that things could be better there today. Even in the face of such changes, if the Chinese state continues to fail to deliver on promises it has made for over eighty years, then the radical elements of the Tibetan independence movement may gain strength and overturn the Dalai Lama's tradition of non-violence.

CONCLUSION AND LOOKING AHEAD

I have attempted to trace here the various aspects of the process through which the Chinese have tried to attract and employ Tibetans in their effort to incorporate Tibet into the Chinese Republic. The earliest efforts involved the application of ideologies of race and nationalism, which though tempting to some Tibetans ultimately proved ineffective, principally because the Chinese government was not willing to live up to its promises of racial equality and national autonomy. Greater success in working with prominent Tibetans exiled in China was enjoyed once the National Government recognized – with titles, offices, and financial remuneration – the importance of religion. Religious recognition of these exiled lamas was critical to their willingness to support the Chinese government. It may be that the Nationalist Chinese government, like the Communist government today, was able to grant this religious recognition precisely because no other religious element played a major role in governing China.³¹ In negotiating the relations with Tibet, China's modern rulers, like earlier Mongol and Manchu emperors, are constantly drawn into the tradition of political and financial support for particular lamas in order to maintain their control over Tibet. But accommodating Tibetan Buddhist practice is only one of the many promises the Chinese government has made to the Tibetans and failed to fulfill. For a positive

³¹ For the weakness of Chinese Buddhism as force in China's politics, see Welch (1968).

outcome in the future, a realization of the promised political autonomy and economic development will also be essential.

For instance, in the introduction of this book the editors note that multinational states are characterized by the fact that they contain more than one group seeking equal status, especially the power of self-determination, which precisely describes the Tibetans' aspirations. Despite the rhetorical titles ("autonomous," Ch. *zizhi*, Tib. *rang skyong*) attached to all political divisions of the Chinese state (regions, prefectures, counties, etc.) that have significant populations of Tibetans, the Chinese party-state clearly recognizes that there is no real political self-determination allowed in Tibetan regions. Until the party-state is willing to accommodate more Tibetan autonomy, unrest will continue in Tibet. Although the Chinese government chooses to see Tibetans' attention to religion and the dictates of their religion as threats to China's territorial sovereignty, some state officials have started to realize that Tibetan Buddhist religion could also be a resource to draw on in order to integrate Tibet as part of China. As discussed in the editors' introduction, Chinese leaders also fear the idea that "giving administrative autonomy to particular groups ... can create a new set of resources that can enhance the group's mobilization and claims, thereby leading to sub-state nationalist mobilization, instability, and secessionist tendencies in some cases."³² But this is not realistic in the Tibetan case, which is different than the case of the Soviet Union's Central Asia republics for a number of reasons. The massive presence of armed forces in this border region, infrastructural integration, and the large presence of Tibetans in government who share the state's interests would make such secession nearly impossible.

While it is true that Tibetan Buddhism has provided multiple opportunities for resistance to the Chinese state in the face of failed promises, this religion is also a cultural resource that is flexible in its ability to adapt. Tibetan Buddhism, as a foundation of Tibetan society, can constitute a resource for legitimizing resistance to the state. Yet, with the right incentives, such as genuine respect for religious freedom, the same body of knowledge could be turned to other ends, as when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama understood Marxism positively through a Buddhist interpretation of that ideology. But to reach this point, Chinese officials will have to stop the practice described in the introduction of this book of only giving symbolic or rhetorical autonomy to the Tibetans. Of course, the Chinese state also needs to live up to its past promises of development in Tibet as well, starting with spending as much on health and education as they do on

³² See the introduction of this volume (Bertrand and Laliberti, p. 14).

transportation and communication infrastructure. The best hope for the future would be to develop a federalist system that allows Tibetans real cultural and religious autonomy within the framework of the People's Republic of China, which would no doubt solve many of the problems of Tibet and be an attractive demonstration of a new system to Taiwan as well.

But at a more practical level, some of the first concrete steps the Chinese government might take towards realizing the latest promise of prosperity through the campaign to Develop the West would be to invest significantly in education and health care for Tibetans all over the plateau. I have already mentioned the disparity between what the Chinese government has spent on infrastructure development (both inside and beyond Tibetan regions) and the paltry funds spent on education and health care in Tibetan regions over the last fifty years. One very easy step the government could take to address this past discrepancy would be to commit significant resources (at least a billion *yuan*) to create four central institutes of higher and continuing education for Tibetans, each with an associated medical clinic. These institutes and clinics could be strategically located around the plateau to reach the widest number of Tibetans. Each of these four centers would be responsible for outreach to a broad section of the relevant surrounding communities, which would be explicitly designed around reaching common dialect groups.

The idea for such new institutions would be to reach the majority of (rural) Tibetans, without requiring them to move to expensive, ethnically Chinese urban centers to gain access to continuing or higher education. Thus, these centers would be entirely Tibetan language medium schools. Among other fields, these institutes and teaching clinics would focus on providing medical clinics that could also serve as education centers in public health and specific training for basic surgeries (such as those given by the Seva Foundation). They would bring together the best Tibetan language textbooks, especially those in science and health care, and spread this knowledge to local teachers and clinicians. These regional institutes for continuing and higher education could offer formal degrees (associates, bachelors of arts, and bachelors of science), but they could also serve as centers for continuing education for teachers from the local schools in their region. Thus, on a regular basis, during periods of school vacation, teachers could be brought to these centers to be introduced to the latest developments in Tibetan language education for rural youth.

Chinese government support for such medical and educational initiatives would provide the centralized and long-term planning that is

necessary to reach millions of Tibetans across a vast and sparsely inhabited region. Such initiative on the part of the Chinese government would also demonstrate the state's real concern for practical matters facing the Tibetan people on a daily basis. Massive urban and infrastructure developments are of limited use to most (rural) Tibetans. To truly fulfill the state's latest promise to Tibetans, the promise of material development, better use of state funds will have to be made. The Chinese state must reach out to rural Tibetans in ways that make a real difference.