



## **Tibet was not Part of China but Middle Way Remains a Viable Solution**

Central Tibetan Administration's Response to China's White Paper on Tibet

The Department of Information and International Relations



The Dalai Lama is like a ray of sunshine, which is impossible for any one group of people to obscure. The ray of Buddhist faith will shine on everyone through him.

Manchu emperor Kangxi to the 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (1720)

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>CCP</b>	Chinese Communist Party
<b>CPPCC</b>	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
<b>CTA</b>	Central Tibetan Administration
<b>LRNA</b>	Law on Regional National Autonomy
<b>NPC</b>	National People's Congress
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China
<b>TAR</b>	Tibet Autonomous Region
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme



## Executive Summary

This response to the Chinese white paper on Tibet challenges Beijing's claims that the legitimacy of His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet rests on China's recognition and approval. This response provides comprehensive explanation with regard to Communist China's schemes of picking the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and its claims of not only territorial sovereignty over Tibet but also sovereignty over the soul of the Tibetan people.

This response argues that there will be an international pushback to such a Chinese move. The pushback will not only come from the Tibetan people but millions of Buddhists who traditionally share Tibet's spiritual culture and others in the rest of the world who have benefitted from the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. These include a growing number of Chinese Buddhists who flock to India and follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama around the world to receive his teachings. Such a move on the part of China will create an international furor comparable to China muscling its way into the South China Sea.

This response also argues that there is a way to resolve the issue. Till now, China has repeatedly rejected the Middle Way Approach. However, if wiser Chinese heads look into the Tibetan proposal of not seeking independence but autonomy for all the Tibetan people under a single administration, they will find in the proposal a solution that respects Tibet's distinct cultural and national identity and preserves the territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China. Increasing number of Chinese intellectuals within and outside China support this peace initiative, including Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate. Their support, Twelve Suggestions for Dealing With the Tibetan Situation, is published as an open letter to the Chinese authorities.

Any move by China to meet the concerns of the Tibetan people along the lines of the Middle Way Approach will pave the way for the restoration of strategic trust between India and China. This will open the borders between the two and free their militaries from entanglements. This in turn will improve the economic and cultural development of the Himalayan region and contribute to lasting peace in Asia.

In such a political atmosphere, Tibet could resume its traditional role of being the centre of Buddhist learning for the whole of the Buddhist Himalayas which will greatly boost the spiritual richness and facilitate economic and cultural interaction of the peoples of the Himalayas.

An approach based on the Chinese constitution to the Tibetan people could send a positive message to the people of Hong Kong that their concerns will be respected by Beijing. Chinese authorities giving meaningful autonomy to the Tibetan people will serve in restoring the confidence of the people of Hong Kong. This will give real meat to the bone of President Xi Jinping's China Dream. When China starts respecting Tibet as a global commons which has immense environmental and development importance to the rest of Asia rather than a colony to be exploited, the people of Hong Kong will no longer be fearful of a common future.

Recognising the just aspirations of the Tibetan people can greatly enhance China's soft power around the world. China does not need to spend millions of dollars in the form of Confucius Institutes across the globe to expand its influence. Millions who have benefitted from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings will come to Tibet to deepen their knowledge and bringing with them international goodwill and laying the groundwork for China's moral ascendancy. More than flexing any military or economic muscle, a just settlement will assure China the international respect it wants. This will be the start of China's new Long March to global leadership.



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## Introduction

Starting on 1 September, Beijing commemorates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the 'Tibet Autonomous Region' in Lhasa. This was preceded by a two-day meeting of the 6th Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing from 24 to 25 August. This meeting was attended by the top Chinese leadership in the party, military and government. The meeting was presided over by President Xi Jinping.

At the meeting, President Xi Jinping said, "Key efforts in the Work for Tibet should be spent on ensuring national unity and consolidating ethnic unity, with realising long-term and comprehensive social stability as an obligatory task." Xi Jinping said the country should "firmly take the initiative" in the fight against separatism.

The ground work for all this was prepared by the white paper on Tibet China issued on 15 April. The white paper reiterated China's focus in Tibet on the twin efforts of economic development and political repression. The key message of the white paper said that there would be no change in this policy.

The publication of the white paper by the State Council on which China's current policy announcements are made comes in the aftermath of an unprecedented debate on policy towards China's minorities. Arrayed on one side of the debate were ultra-nationalists and hardline thinkers. These scholars recommended that the status of non-Chinese as minorities of China should be scrapped and they be subsumed in the melting pot of the majority Chinese identity. Some also suggested that large autonomous regions like Tibet be broken up into smaller administrative units and some of the divided units merged into provinces like Sichuan.

Making counterpoints to this radical thinking were Chinese Communist Party (CCP) scholars who made the argument that treating the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama as an "enemy" would alienate all Tibetans. Rather, they suggested, the Party should seek his active cooperation with the aim of identifying his successor so as to avoid the embarrassment of having "two Dalai Lamas" in the future.

That Beijing with its latest white paper has decided to stick with the status quo in its policy towards Tibet comes as a huge disappointment to all Tibetans who had hoped for a more liberal and flexible policy in the wake of the widespread and peaceful protests that erupted throughout Tibet in 2008 and the ongoing self-immolations. All the 142 Tibetans in Tibet who have set themselves on fire have called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for freedom for the Tibetan people.

That the Party will not change its spectacularly failed policy is clearly reflected in its heightened criticism of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This criticism, based on out-of-context quotes of the Tibetan leader and quotes that are altogether cooked up, amounts to the Party saying that it can rule Tibet without any assistance from him. However, recent comments made by Party functionaries make it also clear that the Party entertains the hope of identifying and appointing the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. In fact, the Party thinks that it can rule Tibet without the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, but is not too sure it can rule Tibet forever without Tibet's incarnate lamas giving some helping hand and a form of legitimacy to its shaky rule on the plateau.

The Party saying that it wants the 15<sup>th</sup> but not the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet to stabilize its rule in Tibet flies in the face of the logic of reincarnating lamas and of plain statecraft. The Party being picky of its choice of Tibet's spiritual leaders reveals its inability to continue to rule Tibet

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without the legitimising influence of the lamas of Tibet. In its insistence in doing this, the Party has put itself in a corner where it is trapped in its own contradictory rhetoric, leaving it with no other policy option.

One clear contradiction is the determinist view of history the Party brings into its polemics on Tibet. As it is clear from the title, the white paper tries to develop the argument that regardless of the efforts of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people, some inscrutable historical force, in this case, the Party, has already decided Tibet's fate. The white paper says, "Tibet's path of development is imposed by history and chosen by the people."

In making these assertions, China's latest white paper carries with it all the ideological confusion and historiographical revisionism of the CCP. Instead of a pragmatic and solution-oriented response to a vexed issue that the CCP has been grappling with since 1951, the optimistically named report, *Tibet's Path to Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide*, consists of apportioning credit and blame. The Party takes credit for all the accomplishments in Tibet and all failures are attributed to "the Dalai clique."

The timing of the white paper between the recent barrage of Party leaders "ordering" His Holiness the Dalai Lama to reincarnate and the forthcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) on 1 September 2015 reveals the Communist Party's nervousness of losing its grip on Tibet. Firstly, the Communist Party's nervousness dawns from the realisation that despite its six decades of rule, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains the irreplaceable jewel in the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. This includes the third generation of Tibetans who have never seen the Tibetan leader, and yet strive for his continued leadership and their fundamental human rights. Secondly, the fiction of autonomy in TAR and other Tibetan areas has failed to curb the Tibetan people's aspiration for basic freedom and their wish to be masters of their own land. All the Tibetan self-immolators echo the overwhelming desire of the Tibetan people for greater freedoms in their homeland.

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## **China's Master Plan for Tibet: Rule by Reincarnation**

There are two principal reasons why the Party wants to grab Tibet's institution of the Dalai Lama and yet rejects the current office holder who has given the institution international gravitas and unprecedented shine within its traditional parish. One is the institution's past geopolitical importance in the volatile politics of China, Mongolia and Tibet and how the Dalai Lamas of Tibet kept the peace between the marauding Mongol Khans and Manchu China. The second reason is the Party's internal assessment that it cannot rule Tibet forever without the legitimising influence of the Dalai Lama over the Tibetan people.

Starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Genghis Khan led his nomadic horsemen from the grasslands of Mongolia onto the pages of world history, the Mongol Khans realised early on that their expanding empire needed a cultural and spiritual glue that would hold the empire in a tighter embrace other than pillage and conquest. Goden and later Kublai Khan thought this glue was Tibetan Buddhism, a universal religion bolstering a world empire. Tibetan Buddhism became the court religion of the Mongol dynasty in China and its foremost lamas the empire's spiritual preceptors. Thus was born the cho-yon or priest-patron relations, an exchange of services, the priest providing spiritual ministry to the emperor and the patron protection of the realm of the priest. From a court religion of the Mongol Khans, Sonam Gyatso, the third Dalai Lama, made Tibetan Buddhism the Mongol people's religion. The fourth Dalai Lama, Yonten Gyatso, was born in Mongolia and since then the devotion of all Mongolia to the Dalai Lamas of Tibet knew no bounds. The cho-yon relationship reached a milestone in 1642 when Gushri Khan, chief of the Khoshut Mongols, helped the Fifth Dalai Lama to become the temporal and spiritual leader of all Tibet.

Mongolia's devotion to the Dalai Lamas of Tibet and the successive Manchu emperors' need to stop Mongol harassment of their imperial fringes gave the cho-yon relations real political and diplomatic clout. Tibet's influence with the Mongols, if not always, largely kept the peace between the Mongols and Manchu China.

By demanding that the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama reincarnate and in its determination to appoint his reincarnation the Party is claiming this spiritual resource of Tibet which at its whim could be turned into a highly potent political tool.

The second reason why the CCP does not want the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet but wishes to retain the system of reincarnating lamas, over which he presides, is to do with the Party's ability or inability to provide effective governance. The Party realises the total collapse of the Tibetan people's trust in its administration. The peaceful protests that erupted throughout Tibet and the ongoing self-immolations are a symptom of the Communist China's consistent failure to win the trust of the Tibetan people. Within the Chinese establishment in Tibet, Tibetan discontent, though muffled, reaches the top echelon. Around a dinner table in Beijing, one senior Tibetan functionary of the Party burst out, "There is no law in Tibet. There are only police and soldiers, but no law" (Fischer, Andrew. 2013. *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China: A Study in the Economics of Marginalisation*).

The predatory nature of the Chinese state in Tibet and the lawlessness it spawns has driven Tibetans to the arms of their traditional leaders, the lamas of Tibet who, teaching simple living, give them a sense of cultural unity and spiritual belonging at a time of great uncertainty and disorientation. In many cases, the prestige of the Tibetan lamas outshines the Party's representatives in these imperial outposts. The result is that many of these lamas land up in prison simply because the people listen to them and not to the Party functionaries.

If ordinary Tibetan lamas in Tibet are able to overshadow local Party officials in terms of

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influence, what happens if the Dalai Lama is allowed to return to Tibet? The Party's fear of the influence of the Dalai Lama in China is best expressed by former President Jiang Zemin. He said even a visit by the Dalai Lama to China would make all Tibetans go mad. The Mongolians would join in this Tibetan madness, so would Chinese democracy activists and all those disgruntled elements in society. In such a situation what should the Party do? If the Party cracked down, there would be an international outcry. If the Party didn't, it would lose power.

This is a risk the Party has no stomach for. Now, the Party wants to wait for the passing away of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and then select a pliant successor to continue its rule in Tibet. In this effort the Party is making frantic preparations. On 10 June 2015, Xi Jinping received the Party-recognised and people-rejected Gyaltsen Norbu (the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama) in audience at Zhongnanhai. Amongst those present at the encounter were Yu Zhengsheng, a member of the standing committee of the Politburo and head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an advisory body, Sun Chunlan, head of the United Front, Li Zhanshu, President Xi's chief of staff and Wang Luning of the Policy Research Office of the Central Committee. Khata in hands and head slightly bowed, Gyaltsen Norbu swore undying allegiance to the Party and to its sitting general secretary. In the Party's game plan, Gyaltsen Norbu would be pivotal in helping the Party to impose a 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama on the Tibetan people.

By making such a move China is laying claims of sovereignty over not only territorial but also spiritual Tibet. To effectively control the heart of Tibet and the soul of its people, China will not only continue to occupy and colonise Tibet but it is also determined to occupy and colonise the Tibetan people's spiritual realm. By making a move in this direction, China is trying to draw on the Tibetan plateau and on Tibet's Buddhist civilisation its version of the nine dash lines it has drawn in the South China Sea to establish the Party's supremacy over Tibet's spiritual realm and that of millions of non-Tibetans around the world. So far China has made claims of sovereignty of territorial Tibet. Now it is making claims of sovereignty over the soul of Tibet.

But will the Party's 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama plan for Tibet work?

If past behavior of Party-approved Tibetan lamas is any indication, such a plan would prove to be a disaster for the Party. The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the lama who stayed back in Tibet, in 1962 wrote a blistering critique of Chinese mis-rule in Tibet and a few days before his untimely death publicly said that Tibet had lost more than it had gained under China. The 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa who was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and approved by the Party escaped Tibet in 2000 to India. So did Arjia Rinpoche, the abbot of Kumbum Monastery, who witnessed the Party's trickery in selecting the China-appointed Panchen Lama before the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in the Jokhang Temple in 1995. "The lamas recited prayers and cheered ritually, but with an obvious lack of enthusiasm. We returned to the hotel about five o'clock that morning, and later, when we turned on the TV, a newsman announced: 'At ten o'clock this morning, the Golden Urn ceremony was held at the Jokhang Temple.' In the close-up on TV it appeared that the ivory lot selected by Bumi Rinpoche stood slightly above the others, but only lie we recognised for certain was the time of the ceremony" (Rinpoche, Arjia. 2010. *Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years under Chinese Rule*).

These lamas have shown that their loyalty to their spiritual inheritance far outweighs any obligation they might have for the Party. But more than the individual preferences of Party-appointees, the Party's dabbling in the spiritual life of the Tibetan people will prove dangerous and inflammatory. Leave alone the Tibetan people who are alienated already, the Party will be provoking the wrath of all believers of the world. This will be a foreign policy disaster worse and more enduring than China's muscling its way into the South China Sea. All the "soft power" China is trying to build around the world will be undone by this act of the Party assaulting the citadel of a major religion of the world. In trying to impose a Dalai Lama on the Tibetan people

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and the world, the Party miscalculates this as the best way to strengthen its rule in Tibet.

Such a move will have other un-intended consequences. Till now, in dealing with Tibet, the Party has been up against the Tibetan people alone. If the CCP decides to manipulate this, the most exalted of Tibetan Buddhism's spiritual institution, to make it serve as a tool to buttress the Party's fading credibility, it would outrage the world of Tibet's Buddhist civilisation which would see this as communist China playing God to Buddhist Tibet.

The Tibetan people, the Tibetan Buddhist Church, which includes the heads and followers of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Tibet's native religion, and all those who fall within the ambit of Tibet's Buddhist civilisation will reject the Party's choice. Their rejection will be stronger and fiercer because of the Party's past assault on Tibet's spiritual traditions and the Party's and Mao Zedong's expressed belief that "religion is poison." The Party's real attitude to the spiritual beliefs of the Tibetan people has not changed. At a state dinner hosted by President Bill Clinton to President Jiang Zemin at the White House in 1997, Hillary Clinton pressed the Chinese President on Tibet. Jiang Zemin denounced the Tibetans as "necromancers," calling them "victims of religion ... now freed from feudalism" (Clinton, Hillary, R. 2014. *Hard Choices*).

Jiang Zemin goes further. In a lengthy conversation with Jacques Chirac, the former French President, the Chinese leader even attributes a political motive to the Tibetan tradition of prostration. He told Chirac, "I am an atheist; you are doubtless a believer, but some beliefs exceed all understanding. I think of those processions in Lhasa in which Tibetans move forward by making full prostrations with each step. There are political reasons. Why those prostrations? Why?" (Chirac, J. 2012. *My Life in Politics*)

Even a suggestion that China make Lhasa the spiritual centre of the country was brusquely dismissed by Jiang. Chirac recounts, "Whatever the world says, responded Jiang, 'what is important for us is the stability of Tibet. The Dalai Lama does not need to return, but if he accepts our two conditions (accepting Tibet and Taiwan as parts of China - Ed), we could negotiate. In any case, China will not accept that Lhasa become a new Jerusalem'" (Chirac, J. 2012. *My Life in Politics*).

Regardless of such expressed Chinese disdain of their beliefs, the Tibetan people whose faith has sustained the system of reincarnating lamas down the centuries believe, without exception, that the Dalai Lama alone has the right to decide the time, place and circumstances of his re-birth. This is the right of the Dalai Lama alone because in their eyes he is the manifestation of Chenresig, the Buddha of Compassion and protector of the Land of Snows. He alone has this right because of his spiritual realisation. No other choice or imposition will be tolerated.

Nor will this act be tolerated by the world. The international community will judge how the Party treats Tibetans today as an accurate indicator of its behavior to the rest of the world. Even hardnosed reporters fear of the Party's behavior. "For now, Tibet, its religion, its god-king all seem impossibly exotic, like an endangered orchid deep in the jungle. Perhaps it was a species on the brink of extinction. I didn't have a clue whether it could be saved. What I did sense, though, was that there might be something even more important than the endgame for Tibet. Perhaps more crucial would be to observe how a rising China behaves toward those it feels are weaker and in its way.

"Today, it is the Tibetans. Tomorrow, those harmonizing about the glorious blue skies of China could be you and me" (Johnson, Tim. 2011. *Tragedy in Crimson: How the Dalai Lama Conquered the World but Lost the Battle with China*).

If the Party is allowed to get away with what in Tibetan eyes is appointing false gods, this will

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be the unhappy prelude to the Party's bigger endgame for the world. This endgame is expressed in the China Dream, China regaining its global primacy as during the height of the Manchu empire. In such a system, according to Henry Kissinger, China "considered itself, in a sense, the sole sovereign government of the world," in which the emperor's jurisdiction was "not the sovereign state of China" alone, but "All Under Heaven, of which China formed the central, civilized part" (Kissinger, Henry. 2014. World Order).

Such a day may not come to pass. The Tibetan people and the world will not let a Party-appointed Dalai Lama come to pass too because on the issue of his reincarnation His Holiness the Dalai Lama has the last and final word. His Holiness issued a public statement on 24 September 2011. Here is what he said:

When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognised, responsibility for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should seek advice and direction from these concerned beings and carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition. I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognised through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the PRC.

Lest anyone forgets, in a recent interview His Holiness the Dalai Lama reminded the world, "Reincarnation is not the business of the communists" [Tibet's Road Ahead: Dalai Lama's 80th Birthday Invites Celebration and Contemplation by Barbara Demick in Los Angeles Times dated 4 July 2015].

To make his point clear, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, jokingly, that for China to have any say in his reincarnation the communist leaders themselves must believe in the concept of reincarnation. He said, "The Chinese Communist Party is pretending that they know more about the reincarnation system than the Dalai Lama," said the Dalai Lama, laughing. "The Chinese Communists should accept the concept of rebirth. Then they should recognize the reincarnation of Chairman Mao Zedong, then Deng Xiaoping. Then they have the right to involve themselves in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation"

[<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/16/opinion/nicholas-kristof-dalai-lama-gets-mischievous.html>].

Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay articulates the Tibetan people's deepest emotions on the issue. He says,

China now claims the right to identify the reincarnation of the Tibetan spiritual leader whom they call 'the devil.' How incredible that the Chinese communist leaders whose ideology regards religion as the opium of the people, and whose founding figure, Mao Zedong, famously told His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Beijing that 'religion is poison,' now orders the Dalai Lama to reincarnate on the Party's terms. Despite more than 50 years of state-sponsored rampage and destruction, the Tibetan people have not lost hope. The source of their hope is His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the power of spirituality. As long as the Tibetan people continue to suffer in their homeland, no Dalai Lama, either the present or those of the future, will become a tool of the Party's rule in occupied Tibet.



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An early indication of how the international community would view China's interference in the spiritual life of the Tibetan people is expressed by the United States government. At the "Lockdown in Tibet" event in Geneva on 15 June 2015, Sarah Sewall, the State Department's Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs said, "The basic and universally recognised right of religious freedom demands that any decision on the next Dalai Lama must be reserved to the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders, and the Tibetan people."

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## Historical Status of Tibet

On Tibetan history, the current white paper intrudes the furthest. The white paper on Tibet in 2004 claims, “Tibet became part of the territory of China in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.” On the other hand, the Chinese Republican-era scholars assert that Tibet became a vassal state of China during the Qing period (1644-1911). Now, with its latest white paper, China has again shifted the goal post and states that Tibet has been an integral part of China since “antiquity”. Even Chinese historians have refuted the claim. Writing for the China Review magazine in 2007, Prof. Ge Jianxiong of Fudan University in Shanghai stated that such claims were a “defiance of history” as the “Tubo/Tufan (Tibetan empire) was a sovereign/ independent of the Tang Dynasty”.

### Ancient Tibet

According to Tibetan annals, the first king of Tibet ruled from 127 BC, but it was only in the seventh century AD that Tibet emerged as a unified state and a mighty empire under Emperor Songtsen Gampo. With his rule, an era of political and military supremacy and territorial expansion started that lasted for three centuries. The King of Nepal and the Emperor of China offered their daughters to the Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo in marriage. Tibetan Emperor Trisong Detsen (755-797) expanded the Tibetan empire by conquering parts of China. In 763 Chang’an (modern Xian), the capital of Tang China, was occupied and China had to pay an annual tribute to Tibet. In 821/823 a treaty was concluded which laid down the borders between Tibet and China. A pillar inscription at the Jokhang in Lhasa bears witness to this border demarcation. The text of this treaty, both in Tibetan and Chinese, was inscribed on three stone pillars. It reads, “Tibet and China shall abide by the frontiers of which they are now in occupation. All to the east is the country of great China; and all to the west is, without question, the country of great Tibet. Henceforth, on neither side shall there be waging of war nor seizing of territory.”

Even Chinese historians have refuted the Chinese government’s claim that Tibet had been ‘part of China since ancient times’. As mentioned earlier, in 2007, Prof. Ge Jianxiong also stated, “China (Zhongguo) only officially became the name of our country with the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. Before this, the idea of China (“Zhongguo”) was not clearly conceptualized.” And he added, “Tubo/Tufan (Tibetan empire) was a sovereign/independent of the Tang Dynasty.”

The late Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, a Vice-chairman of the standing committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), the Chinese parliament, in a speech he gave in 1989, stated, “Some historians claim that Tibet had been a part of China from antiquity, some others claim since the time of Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo through his marriage to the Chinese princess. I do not agree with both these views. When you talk about antiquity, there is no time line or if it is from the time of Songtsen Gampo’s marriage, we all know that the first queen of Songtsen Gampo was Nepal’s princess in which case Tibet should be part of Nepal. How can we explain this?”

### Relations with the Mongol Khans (1240-1350)

The Yuan dynasty was a Mongol empire and its ruler Genghis Khan and his successors conquered vast territories in Europe and Asia, including China. By 1279, the Chinese Song dynasty in southern China fell before the advancing Mongols. The Mongols’ conquest of China was complete. Today, China claims the Yuan Dynasty to be its own dynasty and, by doing so, it lays claim to all Mongol conquests, at least in the eastern half of the Mongol Empire.

Prince Goden, grandson of Genghis Khan, dispatched an expedition to Tibet in 1240 and invited one of Tibet’s leading religious hierarchs, Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182-1251), to his

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court, thus establishing an enduring Tibeto-Mongol relationship. Here began the unique cho-yon (priest-patron) relationship. Kublai Khan, who succeeded Goden Khan, embraced Tibetan Buddhism and appointed Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, nephew of Sakya Pandita, as his spiritual mentor. This cho-yon relationship resulted in Kublai Khan adopting Buddhism as his empire's state religion, and Phagpa became its highest spiritual authority. In gratitude, Kublai Khan offered his Tibetan lama political authority over all Tibet in 1254, conferring various titles on him. This Tibeto-Mongol relationship continued to exist even after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty.

China's white paper claims that, "It was during the Yuan Dynasty that China's central government formally incorporated Tibet into the central administration." In fact, none of the Mongol rulers ever attempted to administer Tibet directly. Tibet did not even pay taxes to the Mongol empire. Tibet broke its political relationship with the Mongols in 1350 when the Tibetan king, Changchub Gyaltzen (1350-1364), replaced the Sakya lamas as the most powerful ruler of Tibet. Changchub Gyaltzen did away with Mongol influence in the Tibetan administrative system and introduced a new and distinctly Tibetan one. He also enacted a code of law (Trimyig Shelchey Chonga, 15-article code), for the administration of justice in the kingdom. China regained its independence from Mongol rule and established the Ming Dynasty eighteen years after that of Tibet.

The year of Mongol military expedition to Tibet in 1240 preceded the Mongol invasion of China's Song Empire in 1279 by 39 years. This debunks China's claim over Tibet based on relations between Mongol Empire and Tibet's Sakya Lamas.

#### **Relations with Ming Emperors (1368-1644)**

Because the relations between Mongol Khans and Tibetan lamas predated the Mongol conquest of China and because Tibet broke away from the Mongol Khans before China regained its independence from them, Chinese Ming emperors inherited no legacy in Tibet from the Mongols. On the other hand, even after the Mongols were driven back to their homeland in Mongolia, various Mongol Khans continued to maintain their intensive religious and cultural ties with Tibet, often in the form of cho-yon relationship, for centuries afterwards. Even if the Mongols did exercise influence in Tibet, it is still too presumptuous on the part of the CCP to claim inheritance of Tibet through erstwhile Mongol rulers of China when an independent Outer Mongolia today exists as the only legitimate representative of the Mongolian people and nation.

Contacts between Tibet and Ming China were spasmodic and largely limited to visits by individual lamas of various, sometimes rival, monasteries to China, and the granting of honorific imperial titles or gifts by the Ming emperors to the visiting lamas.

Prof. Elliot Sperling of the Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, notes, "An examination of the events surrounding the presentation of these titles shows clearly that the recipients held power and /or influence in Tibet prior to their being granted. As such, the titles did not bestow power, but rather acknowledge it, and their granting must be seen as something akin to the not uncommon presentation of honours, titles, or awards by one country to nationals of another" (Blondeau, Anne M., and Buffetrille, Katia.2008. Authenticating Tibet: Answers to China's "100 Questions").

These exchanges are recorded in Tibetan histories from fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, but there is no evidence whatsoever of political subordination of Tibet or its rulers to China or the Ming emperors. In 1578, abbot of the Drepung Monastery, Sonam Gyatso, was received by the ruler of Tumed Mongols, Altan Khan, and was bestowed the title 'Dalai Lama.' Earlier on, in 1550, Altan Khan had led an army against Ming China and captured Beijing briefly. A punitive trade agreement was imposed on Ming China.

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In 1644 the Ming emperors were once again overthrown by foreign conquerors. The Manchus succeeded in establishing their own imperial dynasty, which ruled over a large empire, the most important part of which was China. The Manchus called their new conquest the Qing Dynasty.

### **Relations with the Manchus (1639-1911)**

In 1642, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, with the help of his Mongol patron Gushri Khan, became the supreme political and religious ruler of unified Tibet. Since then, Tibetans have regarded him as their “Gongsa Chenpo” or the Supreme Sovereign. His prestige was recognised far beyond Tibet’s borders. The Fifth Dalai Lama not only maintained a close relationship with the Mongols but also developed intimate ties with the Manchu rulers.

In 1639, before the Dalai Lama acquired supreme political power and before the Manchu conquest of China and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, Manchu Emperor Tai Tsung invited the Dalai Lama to his capital, Mukden (present-day Shenyang). Unable to accept the invitation personally, the Dalai Lama sent his envoy who was treated with great respect by the emperor. Thus, the cho-yon relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Manchu rulers was established.

As was true of the Tibetan relationship with the Mongol emperors, the links developed between Tibetans and the Manchu emperors did not involve China. On this score, Owen Lattimore points out in reference to the Qing Dynasty, “What existed in fact was a Manchu Empire, of which China formed only one part” (Lattimore, Owen. 1962. *Studies in Frontier History: Collected papers 1928-1958*).

Having conquered China and annexed it to the Manchu empire, Emperor Shunzi invited the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1653 for a state visit to the imperial capital. In an unprecedented sign of respect, the Manchu emperor made a four-day journey outside his capital (Peking) to receive the Tibetan sovereign and foremost spiritual leader of Central Asian Buddhists. Commenting on the Dalai Lama’s visit, W.W. Rockhill, an American scholar and diplomat in China, wrote: “(The Dalai Lama) had been treated with all the ceremony which could have been accorded to any independent sovereign, and nothing can be found in Chinese works to indicate that he was looked upon in any other light; at this period of China’s relations with Tibet, the temporal power of the Lama, backed by the arms of Gushri Khan and the devotion of all Mongolia, was not a thing for the Emperor of China to question” (Rockhill, W.W. 1910. *The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and their Relations with Emperors of China 1644-1908*).

As for the white paper’s assertion that the Great Fifth was given the title of the Dalai Lama by emperor Shunzhi is a case of constantly updating history to suit the ruling regime’s current political needs. Such a blatant attempt to re-write history is to re-arrange “facts” and establish nine-dash lines in Tibet’s spiritual realm for the CCP to claim when the need arises. The fact is that Altan Khan in 1578 conferred the title of the Dalai Lama to the Third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso, almost a century ago.

In 1792, the Gorkhas of Nepal invaded Tibet following a dispute between Tibet and Nepal and the Dalai Lama appealed to the Manchu emperor for help. The emperor sent a large army that helped Tibet drive out the Gorkhas, and mediated a treaty of peace between Tibet and Nepal. Since this was the fourth time the emperor was asked to send troops to fight for the Tibetan Government, a “regulation” was suggested which was made in the context of the emperor’s protector role, rather than an order from a ruler to his subjects. This emerges clearly from the statement made by the imperial envoy and commander of the Manchu army, General Fu K’angan, to the Eighth Dalai Lama, which goes thus:

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The Emperor issued detailed instructions to me, the Great General, to discuss all the points, one by one, in great length. This demonstrates the Emperor's concern that Tibetans come to no harm and that their welfare be ensured in perpetuity. There is no doubt that the Dalai Lama, acknowledging his gratitude to the Emperor, will accept these suggestions once all the points are discussed and agreed upon. However, if the Tibetans insist on clinging to their age-old habits, the Emperor will withdraw the Ambans and the garrisons after the troops are pulled out. Moreover, if similar incidents occur in the future, the Emperor will have nothing to do with them. The Tibetans may, therefore, decide for themselves as to what is in their favour and what is not or what is heavy and what is light, and make a choice on their own (Hanzhang, Ya. 1991. *Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*).

Rather than accepting or rejecting the Emperor's suggestion, Tibetans adopted some of the twenty-nine points, which were perceived to be beneficial to them, and disregarded those they thought to be unsuitable. As the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama said, "Where Chinese policy was in accordance with their own views, the Tibetans were ready to accept the Amban's advice; but ... if this advice ran counter in any respect to their national prejudices, the Chinese Emperor himself would be powerless to influence them" (Diary of Capt. O'Connor, 4 September 1903).

Among the important suggestions of this "twenty-nine-point edict" was the emperor's proposal for the selection of great incarnate lamas, including the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas, by drawing lots from a golden urn. This important task, however, remained the responsibility of the Tibetan Government and high lamas, who continued to select reincarnations according to Tibetan religious traditions. Thus, even on the first occasion when the golden urn should have been employed for the selection of the Ninth Dalai Lama in 1808, Tibetans disregarded it.

Another important point of this "edict" was the role of Ambans. The Amban's role resembled that of an ambassador, at times, and that of a resident in a classical protectorate relationship, at other times. It is best defined in the explanation Amban Yu Tai gave in 1903 to Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India. Foreign Secretary Durand said, "He was only a guest in Lhasa - not a master - and he could not put aside the real masters, and as such he had no force to speak of" (Sykes, Percy. 1997. *The Right Honourable Sir Mortimer Durand: A Biography*).

Similarly, two Lazarist missionaries, Huc and Gabet, who were in Lhasa in the mid-nineteenth century, described the position of the Ambans as follows: "The Government of Tibet resembles that of the Pope and the position occupied by the Chinese Ambassadors was the same as that of the Austrian Ambassador at Rome" (Huc, M. 1933. *Decouverte du Thibet, 1845-1846*).

This ground reality and the wisdom of leaving Tibet alone was realized by Qing China's last empress dowager Cixi before the Manchus abruptly changed their policy and invaded Tibet. "It seems she (Cixi) understood that the Tibetans' desire to be left alone was non-negotiable, and came to the conclusion that only by respecting it she could keep Tibet in the empire" (Chang, Jung. 2013. *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine who Launched Modern China*).

However, the unprecedented invasion of Tibet by Manchu troops in 1908 was a turning point in relations between Tibet and the Manchu emperor. Previous imperial military expeditions had come to assist the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan Government at their invitation. However, this time, the Manchu emperor attempted to establish his authority in Tibet by force, largely to 'remove increasing British influence in Tibet'. In 1910, the Dalai Lama fled to neighbouring India, but the occupation of Tibet was short-lived. When the Manchu Emperor tried to "depose" the Dalai Lama in 1910, the Dalai Lama declared the termination of the cho-yon relationship.

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The protector had attacked his lama, his protected, and, thereby, violated the very foundation of their relationship. Resistance to the invasion succeeded when the Manchu Empire collapsed in 1912 and Tibetans forced the occupation army to surrender. That summer Nepalese mediation between Tibet and China resulted in the conclusion of the “Three-Point Agreement” providing for formal surrender and the expulsion of all remaining imperial troops. After returning to Lhasa, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama issued a proclamation reaffirming the independence of Tibet in February 1913.

### **Tibet and Republican China**

Tibetan government signed several bilateral treaties with other countries including one in 1913 with Mongolia and in 1914 with British India known as the Simla Agreement. This proves the independent status of Tibet. In response to a letter from Chinese President Yuan Shikai, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama rejected the invitation to join the Republic, explaining courteously but firmly that Tibetans did “not approve” of the Chinese government due to past injustices. He stated, “The Republic has only just been proclaimed and the national foundations are far from strong. It behooves the President to exert his energies towards the maintenance of order. As for Tibet, the Tibetans are quite capable of preserving their existence intact and there is no occasion for the President to worry himself at this distance or to be discomposed” (Guomin Gongbao, 5 January 1913).

On Tibet’s independence and the border territories that China had occupied, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama said, “Under the priest-patron relationship that prevailed so far, Tibet has enjoyed wide independence. We wish to preserve this. We feel that there will be long-term stability if the territories we have lost to outsiders are returned to us” (Record of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s communication, dated 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> Tibetan Month, Iron Horse Year, 1930).

Irrespective of proclamations issued by the Tibetan government and the Chinese government at that time, which could be construed as biased, we have the judgment of international bodies and independent scholars to consider. The International Commission of Jurists endorsed the fact that “At least prior to 1950, Tibet remained an independent country.” Warren Smith Jr. writes in his book, *The Tibetan Nation*, “Despite the Chinese Communists’ attempt to construe the 17-Point Agreement as an internal affair, the 17-Point Agreement has some of the characteristics of an international treaty. The very necessity of a treaty between Tibet and China is indicative of their separate political status. No other region of PRC required such an instrument of incorporation.”

In an official correspondence from the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada dated 21 November 1950 to the Canadian Ambassador in Washington DC included the following paragraph. “The question is, should Canada consider Tibet to be an independent state, a vassal of China, or an integral portion of China. It is submitted that the Chinese claim to sovereignty over Tibet is not well founded. Chinese suzerainty, perhaps existent, though ill-defined, before 1911, appears since then, on the basis of facts available to us, to have been a mere fiction. In fact, it appears that during the past 40 years Tibet has controlled its own internal and external affairs. Viewing the situation thus, I am of the opinion that Tibet is, from the point of view of international law, qualified for recognition as an independent state.”

Republican China’s last head of mission in Lhasa, Shen Tsung-Lien, wrote after leaving the country in 1948 that “Since 1911 Lhasa (Tibetan government) has to all practical purposes enjoyed full independence” (Shen, T. and Liu, S. 1973. *Tibet and the Tibetans*).

Tibetan independence was a geopolitical reality which Republican China internally acknowledged. This reality was something which Republican China wanted Tibet to continue to enjoy. During his student days in Nanjing, Gyalo Thondup, the elder brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, said President Chiang Kai-shek expressed his thinking on the issue. “Chiang

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was also willing for Tibet to remain independent. With the Dalai Lama running Tibet and me by his side, if Tibet still wanted independence without foreign exploitation, Chiang said, he would support it. Tibet was China's back door. The two countries would always have close ties" (Thondup, Gyalo, and Thurston, Anne F. 2015. *The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong: The Untold Story of My Struggle for Tibet*).

Mao Zedong himself, when he passed through the border regions of Tibet during the Long March, and was given food and shelter by local Tibetans, remarked, "This is our only foreign debt, and some day we must pay the Mantzu (sic) and the Tibetans for the provisions we were obliged to take from them" (Snow, Edgar. 1961. *Red Star Over China*).

### **The Recognition of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and Republican China**

On the enthronement of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the white paper says, "On 22 February, following established historical traditions, the central government representative Wu Zhongxin and the Tibetan Regent Reting Hutuktu presided over the enthronement ceremony of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. Lhamo Thondup's enthronement as the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama owed its legality to the central government's regulations on the Dalai Lama system, and approval (sic) by the government of the Republic of China."

In reality, the CCP's claims on the institution of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet are based on doctored history. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet was selected on 28 June 1939 according to the age-old religious beliefs and spiritual traditions of the Tibetans. No approval of the Chinese Government was needed or sought. In 1939, before Wu Zhongxin, arrived in Lhasa, Regent Reting had already announced the name of the present Dalai Lama in the Tibetan National Assembly as the authentic reincarnation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, which was unanimously confirmed by the Assembly.

When the enthronement ceremony took place on 22 February 1940, the Chinese envoy, Wu Zhongxin, like envoys from Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and British India, had no special role. The fictitious account by Wu Zhongxin, which communist China today repeats with revolutionary zeal, reflects what China had intended to do, but did not take place. Chinese propaganda used a news report featuring a photograph of the Dalai Lama with Wu Zhongxin. The photograph was captioned as having been taken during the enthronement ceremony.

However, according to Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, this photo was taken a few days after the ceremony, when Wu was granted the favour of a private audience with the child Dalai Lama.

"Wu Zhongxin's claim of having presided over the enthronement ceremony on the basis of this photograph is a blatant distortion of historical facts," Ngabo said in *Tibet Daily* on 31 August 1989.

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## The Middle Way Approach

One striking feature of China's latest white paper on Tibet is its attempt to distort the Middle Way Approach. The white paper gives the usual Chinese official argument that the Middle Way Approach is to "split" China and is a "disguised" form of Tibetan independence. The new argument the white paper now gives is that the aim of the Middle Way Approach is to create "a state within a state." In the rest of the world this form of governance is called a federal system. India and the United States are good examples. To borrow the white paper's terminology, these two countries could be defined as "many states within a state." The federal form of governance is working well in these two countries because they give the states within their national boundaries much leeway in terms of making laws, allocating resources, developing a liberal education system and a host of other rights that do not conflict with the central governments' core responsibility of defending national interests.

This federal system is practiced by China with Hong Kong in the form of "one country, two systems."

Whatever the current attitude of the Chinese government to the Middle Way Approach, a vast number of independent Chinese scholars consider the Middle Way Approach the most reasonable solution to preserving the integrity of China and preventing Tibet from spinning out of PRC's control.

The Middle Way Approach is a pragmatic policy that is based on the principles of justice, compassion, non-violence, friendship and in the spirit of reconciliation. It does not envisage victory for oneself and defeat for others.

China's growing defensiveness on Tibet can also be gauged from its reaction to the popular support and acceptance the Middle Way Approach has garnered over the years within China and internationally.

Zhu Weiqun, Chairman of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee, on 16 April 2015, unintentionally revealed the amount of pressure the Chinese government receives from the international community to open a dialogue with the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama based on the Middle Way Approach. He said, "In recent years, the Dalai Lama 'group' has actively campaigned for the Middle Way Approach internationally. Even though we (Chinese government) have criticised it, there are those who support it. Some international forces claim the Middle Way is a win-win situation for China and Tibetans."

Instead of addressing the contents of the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People, the white paper distorts facts and manufactures quotes in an attempt to denounce the Middle Way Approach. Similar observations on China's reluctance to engage in constructive dialogue were made by Beat U. Wieser of *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* in an article following his interview with Zhu Weiqun in 2013. He wrote, "The representatives of the Dalai Lama present their ideas of a Tibetan autonomy within the Chinese framework point by point, with exact reference to the Chinese constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy (LRNA), whereas the Chinese representatives sweep aside everything, making blanket accusations as if they had not read at all the submitted texts"

[\[http://tibet.net/2013/12/chinese-functionary-rules-out-tibet-autonomy-criticizes-divisive-nature-of-dalai-lama-clique/\]](http://tibet.net/2013/12/chinese-functionary-rules-out-tibet-autonomy-criticizes-divisive-nature-of-dalai-lama-clique/).

In stark contrast to the allegations leveled by the white paper, the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy neither seeks independence nor "a state within a state... [with] the ultimate goal of full independence". The Middle Way Approach aspires for meaningful autonomy for the



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Tibetan people to live under a single administration within the scope of the constitution of PRC. This is the aspiration of the Tibetan people and one which they deserve.

The white paper's attempt at sullyng the stature of His Holiness the Dalai Lama will fail to convince the international community and more importantly the Chinese people. This is because His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains a true friend of the Chinese people and the best hope for a peaceful resolution of the issue of Tibet. In the mid-1990s when US government was discussing whether to grant Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trading status to China, His Holiness the Dalai Lama publicly stated that "as the world's most populous nation, China deserved it."

Similarly, he supported Beijing's bid to stage the Olympic Games in 2008 even when there was a worldwide protest against this decision. The Chinese government must realise that their vilification campaign against His Holiness the Dalai Lama will breed resentment that no amount of material development by China in Tibet can compensate.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) firmly believes that dialogue is the only way forward to resolve the issue of Tibet. Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay has reiterated the Tibetan leadership's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the issue of Tibet through dialogue between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and representatives of the Chinese leadership. The Middle Way Approach, which seeks to accommodate China's core interests while protecting those of the Tibetans, has evolved since it was first enunciated.

In 1974, His Holiness the Dalai Lama in consultation with the exile Tibetan leadership decided not to seek independence for Tibet and to work towards the realisation of meaningful autonomy for a united Tibet. This later came to be known as the Middle Way Approach. When the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, made contacts with the exile Tibetan leadership in 1979, he told His Holiness the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Gyalo Thondup, that "Except Independence, everything is negotiable. Everything can be discussed." In view of this, His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent four fact-finding missions to Tibet and two exploratory delegations to Beijing from 1979 to 1985.

The urgency for an early settlement of the Tibetan issue was further compounded in 1985 when the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi announced its government's intention to "change both the ecological imbalance and the population lack" not just in Tibet but also in other "sparsely populated outlying regions." The announcement said, Chinese "migration should be welcomed by the local population, and should result in a population increase of sixty million over the next thirty years in those regions." The announcement went on to say, "This is a very conservative estimate. As a matter of fact, the increase might swell to a hundred million in less than thirty years" (Movement Westward, Reference Material No. 2, Embassy of the People's Republic of China (PRC), New Delhi, 4 February 1985).

In 1987, the moderate Party general secretary Hu Yaobang was deposed for his sympathy for Tibet and for liberal reforms in China. Around the same time, anti-Dalai Lama propaganda resurfaced with the venom and invectiveness reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, leading to a cycle of protests and imprisonment. These protests from 1987 to 1990s, staged by the new generation of Tibetans born under Chinese rule, were quelled with the use of force and declaration of martial law in Lhasa from March 1989 through April 1990.

Undeterred, His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented his Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet at the US Congress in 1987 and the Strasbourg Proposal at the European Parliament in 1988. Chinese government rejected these proposals and employed harsher policies to quash the Tibetan people's spirit. Owing to the lack of response from the Chinese government to his proposals, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was compelled to declare on 10 March 1992 the Strasbourg

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Proposal invalid as the basis of future discussion, though he said he and his administration “were committed to the path of negotiations.”

In 1995 His Holiness the Dalai Lama called for a referendum to decide the future course of the Tibetan people’s struggle. 64% of Tibetans who participated in the preliminary opinion poll expressed their wish that there was no need to hold a referendum, and that they would support whatever policy His Holiness the Dalai Lama pursued. Based on this opinion poll, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile adopted a unanimous resolution in 1997 which made the Middle Way Approach the foundation of the Tibetan people’s non-violent struggle.

On 6 July 2000, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the governments of its Member States to “give serious consideration to the possibility of recognising the Tibetan Government in exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people if, within three years, the Beijing authorities and the Tibetan government in exile have not, through negotiations organised under the aegis of the Secretary General of the United Nations, signed an agreement on a new Statute for Tibet”.

Dialogue with China resumed in 2002, which eventually led to nine rounds of talks. During the 7<sup>th</sup> round of talks in 2008, the Chinese government asked the Tibetan leadership to put in writing the nature of autonomy it sought. Accordingly, the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented to the Chinese leadership the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People. The Memorandum explicitly states that the genuine autonomy sought by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA for the Tibetan people is based on the framework of the Chinese constitution and the LRNA.

The Memorandum calls for the exercise of genuine autonomy for Tibetans under a single administration to self-govern 11 basic aspirations of the Tibetan people. These include Tibetan language, culture, religion, education, environmental protection, utilisation of natural resources, economic development and trade, public security, regulation on population migration and cultural, educational and religious exchanges with other countries.

Contrary to what the white paper alleges, the Memorandum does not propose the withdrawal of the (People’s Liberation Army) PLA from Tibet. However, with Tibetans facing greater marginalisation from the state-induced massive influx of Chinese settlers and migrant workers, the Memorandum proposes to regulate population migration as enshrined in Article 43 of the LRNA under China’s constitution. The article says that “in accordance with legal stipulations, the organs of self-government of national autonomous area shall work out measures for control of the transient population.” Population migration is of great concern as large numbers of non-Tibetans have settled in Tibetan areas in the last few decades. This has resulted in Tibetans becoming minority in their own land.

The proposal contained in the Memorandum in no way implies a denial of the authority of the NPC and other organs of the Chinese state. Any form of genuine autonomy entails a division and allocation of power and responsibilities, including that of making laws and regulations, between the central and the autonomous local governments. Of course, the power to adopt laws and regulations is limited to the areas of competency of the autonomous region. This is true in unitary states as well as in federal systems.

A quick review of the history of the evolution of the Chinese constitution and the Party’s policy on Tibet reveals the steady dilution of rights of minorities from the right of secession to self-determination in the 1930’s and to a limited and even restrictive autonomy under a unitary state today.

While in principle, the constitution of the PRC makes provisions on autonomy for broad decision-

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making authority at the provincial level, this provision is missing in autonomous regions such as Tibet. In making laws, the autonomous regions need ‘approval’ from the central government while provinces could ‘report’ to the central government the laws they have already made. It is clear that the provincial governments appear to enjoy more autonomy in amending and modifying national laws than autonomous governments” (Sangay, Lobsang. 2005. Proceedings of the Seminar on China’s National Regional Autonomy Law: Theory and Practice in Tibet).

Instead of issuing white papers, there is an urgent need for China to withdraw its failed Tibet policy and replace it with a new policy based on the reasonable aspirations of the Tibetan people. The widespread protests throughout the Tibetan plateau in 2008, the security force’s disproportionate use of force, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions of scores of Tibetans has left a deep political scar on the minds of the Tibetans. Coupled with this, decades of economic marginalisation, cultural assimilation, and other policies aimed at identity erosion have contributed to deepening the Tibetan people’s resentment. With no effective redress mechanism in place, this resentment burst out in the form of self-immolation by a young monk called Tapey in February 2009. That single protest has engulfed the whole of Tibet. Till now, 142 Tibetans have set themselves on fire, calling for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his homeland and freedom for the Tibetan people.

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### **Tibetan desire for a single autonomous administration has a precedence**

Tibetans in Tibet have repeatedly called on China to bring all of Tibet under one single administration. Many Chinese leaders, including Premier Zhou Enlai, Vice Premier Chen Yi and Party Secretary Hu Yaobang, supported the consideration of bringing all Tibetan areas under a single administration. Some of the most senior Tibetan leaders in the PRC, including the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme and Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal had supported the idea. They noted this would accord with the PRC's constitution and its laws. In 1956, a special committee, which included senior Communist Party member Sangye Yeshe (Tian Bao), was appointed by the Chinese government to make a detailed plan for the integration of the Tibetan areas into a single autonomous region, but the work was later sabotaged by Chinese ultra-leftists.

In 1980, a group of Tibetan communist cadres from Gansu's Gannan Autonomous Prefecture wrote a petition to the Chinese government expressing desire to establish a United Autonomous Region of Tibetan Nationality.

In a series of letters sent to President Hu Jintao, Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal stated that "With regard to the question of establishing a United Autonomous Region of Tibetan Nationality, some concerned people think that this is a point of view suggested by overseas Tibetans, which is a big misconception since such ideas had already been there" (Wangyal, Bapa, P. 2007. Witness to Tibet's History).

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## **Why Tibet Continues to Burn**

The white paper says, “In August 2011, the new leader of the so-called Tibetan government-in-exile announced a new commitment to non-violence. Subsequently, the Dalai group leadership began to incite Tibetan lamas and lay followers inside China to engage in acts of self-immolation, leading to a series of such incidents in a number of regions.”

On the contrary, the CTA has repeatedly appealed to Tibetans in Tibet to desist from self-immolation. This chorus has been joined in by high Tibetan lamas, including the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, which has urged Tibetans in Tibet to cherish life and not to set themselves on fire. In fact, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has issued a longstanding invitation to Beijing to send an investigation team to Dharamsala to search for evidence whether “the Dalai clique” has any links with protests in Tibet, self-immolation or other forms.

The job of any responsible ruling regime is to address problems and not apportion blame. Beijing so far has not done this for the simple reason that all its problems in Tibet are triggered by its repressive policies and its unprecedented intrusion into the lives of the Tibetan people. Those who have self-immolated so far have two simple demands: the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for the Tibetan people. These are within the power of Beijing to do so. If these two demands are met, China’s Tibet headache will vanish and Tibet will enjoy true stability within a confident and tolerant China.

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## **Tibet's Economic Development and China's 'Boomerang Aid'**

While the Chinese government attempts to rationalise its occupation of Tibet stating that it was backward and feudal, Tibet today is far from current international standards in terms of human development. Tibet today is off-limits to any scrutiny by independent international media and rights groups. On the issue of the current state of Tibet's development, the United Nations Development Programme says, "Tibet still lags behind other areas of China in terms of human development. Harsh conditions, scarce resources, and insufficient infrastructure limit potential sources of economic growth. Meanwhile, the growth that does take place is concentrated in cities and yields little benefit to many ethnic Tibetans, most of whom live in rural areas and lack skills compared to migrant workers from other parts of China."

There is an acute need for a shift in the basic approach towards the development of Tibet. Beijing's approach has led to chronic dependence on subsidies, referred to as "blood transfusion economy" by economists. There is massive central government aid to Tibet to develop infrastructure, highways, railway lines, airports and communications system, all aimed to facilitate Beijing's control of Tibet. But what the central government's right hand gives to Tibet is also taken away by its left hand. Economists define this sleight of hand as "boomerang aid." Tibet's expanding network of highways and railway lines is helping Beijing to exploit the region's abundant natural resources. Tibet's water and hydro energy resources and its minerals are exploited with no or little compensation for the local Tibetans.

On the other hand, Beijing's focus on urbanisation and infrastructure, plus settling the Tibetan plateau with immigrants, has not really helped to improve the life of the majority of Tibetans but has increased their marginalisation. Nor has there been a transfer of skills to Tibetans. Tibet continues to rely on outside aid, both capital and labour. "This urban-oriented growth has contributed to rapidly increasing income disparity between urban and rural areas, and between Han and Tibetan populations" (Holcombe, Arthur. 10 June 2002. Testimony to US Congressional Executive Commission on China).

The Chinese government often talks about spending millions on boosting development in Tibet, but how much of that money is actually spent on improving health, education, job and social welfare that benefit the local Tibetans is a big question. China's own statistics show that most of the money as part of China's Western Development programme is being spent on mega projects like extending and expanding highways, railways and airports to transport minerals from Tibet and bring in tourists, officials and Chinese migrants to the plateau.

What Tibetans actually need are good schools with qualified teachers, hospitals with modern facilities and doctors, jobs and employment opportunities in their own villages and towns.

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## **Conclusion: Some Suggestions to Beijing**

For China the benefits of resolving the issue of Tibet far outweigh any potential risks. The only risk, as articulated by the Chinese leaders, is that the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama might serve as a rallying point for all the disgruntled elements in the Chinese society. But that risk originates from the imagination of risk-averse Chinese leaders than from the track record of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's leadership. He has consistently advocated the virtues of reconciliation, compromise and non-violence. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a healer, not a wrecker.

Apart from this imagined risk, here are some of the enormous benefits of a speedy and just resolution to the issue of Tibet.

### **Tibet: Bridge Between India and China**

China's willingness to resolve the issue of Tibet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama will remove the biggest strategic mistrust between the two Asian giants. This strategic mistrust originated during the Great Game when three empires, British India, Tsarist Russia and Manchu China warily eyed each other's intentions on the sprawling Tibetan plateau. When British India invaded Tibet in 1904, it provoked the worst fears of Manchu China of the real possibility of a great power invading China through what it considered its backdoor. In an attempt to restore the strategic balance in its favour, China invaded Tibet in 1949 which was the larger cause of the border war between India and China in 1962.

Any move by China to meet the concerns of the Tibetan people along the lines of the Middle Way Approach will pave the way for the restoration of strategic trust between India and China. This will open the borders between the two and free their militaries from entanglements. This in turn will improve the economic and cultural development of the Himalayan region and contribute to lasting peace in Asia.

In such a political atmosphere, Tibet could resume its traditional role of being the centre of Buddhist learning for the whole of the Buddhist Himalayas which will greatly boost the spiritual richness and facilitate economic and cultural interaction of the peoples of the Himalayas and beyond.

### **Tibet: A Model for Hong Kong**

An approach based on the Chinese constitution to the Tibetan people could send a positive message to the people of Hong Kong that their concerns will be respected by Beijing. Chinese authorities giving meaningful autonomy to the Tibetan people will serve in restoring the confidence of the people of Hong Kong. This will give real meat to the bone of President Xi Jinping's China Dream. When China starts respecting Tibet as a global commons which has immense environmental and development importance to the rest of Asia rather than a colony to be exploited, the people of Hong Kong will no longer be fearful of a common future.

### **China's Global Soft Power Enhanced**

Recognising the just aspirations of the Tibetan people can greatly enhance China's soft power around the world. China does not need to spend millions of dollars in the form of Confucius Institutes across the globe to expand its influence. Millions who have benefitted from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings will come to Tibet to deepen their knowledge and bringing with them international goodwill and laying the groundwork for China's moral ascendancy. More than flexing any military or economic muscle, a just settlement will assure China the international respect it wants. This will be the start of China's new Long March to global leadership.