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| Divided China |
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Abstract

The paper discusses how China controls the Tibetan Autonomous Region through political means; how China uses their policies to suppress an entire nation. It can also be said that China often uses brute force, i.e. violence to do so. In order to discover why, the author used many different sources which include: Internet, personal interviews, political magazines, and encyclopedias. The author even went as far as asking the Dalai Lama for his advice on the subject. The author continuously searched and is still searching for expert in the local area but has yet to find any. However, it is clear to the writer that Tibet is a hot topic. The results found indicate that China’s main source of control over Tibet is violence. Since 2008 China has been sending “secret agents” into Tibet in order to setup propaganda within the region. Tibet only wants autonomy, however, autonomy and even independence comes at a price. Even when the whole of Tibet receives autonomy, China will enforce more restrictions upon the Tibetan people. China will claim the Machu and Dirchu rivers in Tibet that eventually flow into China (Yangtse, Huang Ho). It can be said that Tibet enjoys the economic prosperity that China enjoys. Many Tibetans want to stay under the protection of China. But most want autonomy. Based on these facts the can make influences as to why some Tibetans don’t want autonomy and why they always want China there, furthering the research process.

The nation of Tibet, a prosperous land with many beautiful aspects: the countryside, the capital, Lhasa, the monstrous Himalayas to the north. It’s a spectacular sight however, “for at least 1500 years, the nation of Tibet has had a complex relationship with its large and powerful neighbor to the east, China. The political history of Tibet and China reveals that the relationship has not always been as one-sided as it now appears” (Szczepanski). The balance of power between the two factions has shifted over the centuries. The first recorded meeting between the Tibet and China was in 640 ADE when a Tibetan king, Songstan Gampo, married the niece of Tang emperor Taizong. During his reign, Gampo took parts of the Yarlung River Valley, along with many other territories in the modern day Qinghai, Gansu, and Xinjiang provinces. However, in 692 China retook these provinces and the power shifted to China for the first time.

Effective politicians, the Tibetan government befriended the Mongol leader, Ghengis Khan. Tibet and its government paid tribute to Ghengis Khan and the Mongol Horde after they conquered China, allowing them to have greater autonomy than they do today. Over time, Tibet became labeled as one of the 13 provinces in Khan’s new Yuan China. “During this period, the Tibetans gained a high degree of influence over the Mongols in courts” (Szczepanski).

In 1368, when the Mongols Yuan China fell to an ethnic Han-Chinese emperor, Tibet reasserted its independence and refused to pay homage to the new Emperor. In 1474, the leader of an important Tibetan Buddhist monastery, Gendun Drup, passed away. Two years later, a child was born and was found to be the reincarnation of Gendun Drup. After their lifetimes, they were deemed the first and second Dalai Lamas. A third reincarnation was found and he was deemed the 3rd Dalai Lama. He assumed the royal throne in 1562 and the succeeding Dalai Lamas ruled the secular side of the Tibetan government for the next 80 years. By 1634, Mongol warlord Ligdan Khan invaded Tibet and decided to destroy the current government (Yellow Hats or *Gelug*).

By 1724 Tibet had gone through numerous Dalai Lamas and countless attacks from Mongols and China’s military. Also in 1724 Tibet was going through a time of instability; China took advantage of this instability and occupied the region. Three years later, China and Tibet signed a treaty, officially marking the border between the two factions. These borders remained the same until 1910. However, just because China occupied Tibet doesn’t mean that China didn’t have its hands full. “The Imperial Army then defeated the rebels, but the Emperor recognized that he would have to rule through the Dalai Lama rather than directly. Day-to-day decisions would be made on the local level” (Szczepanski).

By the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso, Tibet was still experiencing political and economic turmoil due to Chinese oppression. Because of this, Gyatso fled the country thanks to a Russian disciple, Agvan Dorzhiev. First Gyatso fled to Mongolia and then made his way to Beijing. The Chinese government declared that the Dalai Lama had been deposed as soon as he left Tibet; China then claimed full sovereignty over not just Tibet, but Nepal and Bhutan as well. The Dalai Lama travelled to the capital to discuss the situation with the current emperor but refused to bow down to him. Gyatso stayed in the capital from 1906 to 1908. He returned to Lhasa in 1909, disappointed by China’s policy towards Tibet. By the time Thubten Gyatso returned, however, China sent 6000 troops to Tibet. The 13th Dalai Lama, once again fled, this time to Darjeeling, India. By 1911, the Chinese Revolution swept away the Qing dynasty. By 1912, Gyatso returned to Lhasa.

In 1950, despite efforts calling for peace, China once again invaded the region of Tibet. The region was not invaded due to China’s imperialistic views on the world, however. This time, China invaded the region because of the new Communist regime, under Mao Zedong. One of the major reasons Tibet was invaded, this time, is that Tibet freely practices Buddhism whereas the rest of China, due to a Communist regime, has no religion. Mao Zedong’s goal was to eliminate religion and begin a new culture in China. This new culture called for no religion, no diversity (meaning everyone practices the same, essentially looks and acts the same), and no self-expression. Tibet, decided not to “kowtow” to Zedong and break away from his views on a new China.

Another point that needs to be made is that just before China completely overtook Tibet, the Chinese and Tibetan governments agreed to a treaty (The Seventeen Point Treaty). In this treaty, Tibet recognized the authority of China over Tibet and that Tibet becomes assimilated into China. The Chinese government claims that this treaty verifies that their invasion of the region was just. However, the current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, believes that the Tibetan government was forced to sign the treaty, making China’s claim to justification null. Adding to Tibet’s claim: China promised not to "...alter the existing political system in Tibet" and that "in matters relating to various reforms in Tibet there would be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities"(Free Tibet Campaign).

 Another major reason is that China wants the resources found in the region. For example, in July of 2006 China built a railway that ran all the way to/through Tibet. “…International critics howled at the prospect that the region's culture and environment would be ravaged in search of resources” (Lustgarten). As it turns out, China’s Ministry of Land and resources has disclosed that they have found a multitude of new resources in Tibet due to a secret, seven million dollar survey project that preceded the railway project from the start. With this information China’s government will soon begin ravaging the Tibetan countryside and eventually, the capital, Lhasa.

All the reasons mentioned above are very important but the most important reason for the invasion of Tibet is: location. Ever since 692, Tibet has been targeted because of its location. “Because it is located in the center of the Asian continent, Tibet has a considerable geostrategic position (from a physical, economical geography and demography point of view)” (Invasion of Tibet). This is probably the main reason that continuous invasions of Tibet occur. Tibet has numerous resources available for the taking and as long as the world doesn’t respond, it will continue to happen. China also wants the land because Tibet is high up in the Himalayas and able to look down in India, China’s other rival as of yet. Also, if there were to be a war between India and China, being up a mountain is more advantageous.

Controlling Tibet keeps virtually all other powers from gaining influence in the region. If Tibet were controlled by another nation, it may make China feel uneasy or apprehensive. Another nation could build weapons of the nuclear type or place military forces, neither of which China would particularly care for. By the same token, if China were to relinquish power in the region, Tibet wouldn’t just stay closed off to the world; countries would want to deal with Tibet, help it get back on its feet, develop some international relations. Lastly, people don’t want to give up something they think is theirs, it’s human nature.

Another argument was made (about China’s political control of Tibet) by a professor at Stanford. He said that Tibet has always been a part of China. He also linked this back to the United States saying if Florida wanted to secede the government would step in and resist the notion. “I would not for a moment discount the force of history as the Chinese see it. The past century of Chinese history – the century leading up to 1950, let us say, from 1850 to 1950 – was a disaster for China, and many of the areas that it had traditionally thought it had influence in or a degree of control over were taken from it by the European powers, by Japan, by Russia, by others. And there was a sense that Tibet might fall into the hands of either the British or the Russians, to the great strategic detriment of China. And so when the People’s Republic of China was established in 1950, there was a strong sense that no more is to be taken from China, and that what China had and can claim and had always claimed is a claim that can be disputed. I’m not for a moment saying that this is a claim that all would recognize or should recognize, but for the Chinese leaders from Sun Yat-sen to Chiang Kai-shek to Mao Tse-tung, Tibet was a part of China and Taiwan is a part of China, and it must be that way just as we would not ever permit any part of the United States to secede. We are a nation integral, and if Florida decided that it was going to establish an independent republic, we would resist that notion. So this historical and cultural imperative, I would almost say, the nationalism that Emily referred to, is extremely strong. And from a balance sheet standpoint, China has invested far, far more, and continues to invest on an annual basis, far more money and other resources, including prestige, in the international arena, where it is generally criticized for its policies in Tibet, far more is invested there than it derives from the mineral deposits or other tangible assets that Tibet may have” (Slyke).

China is able to use many different techniques/methods to impose their authority over Tibet. For example, China’s government is using a sort of brainwashing technique over the Tibetan people. They are moving ethnic Han-Chinese officials into Tibet to bolster the Chinese government in the region. That is the only subtle form of control that China uses. In other instances, many other instances, China has sent entire armies to control peaceful protests or to oversee the people’s actions. The Chinese government has also suppressed the people of Tibet to the point that they are about to break. The people of the world have already seen this in the news since about 1959, beginning with the Tibetan Uprising of 1959. Recently we have seen a significant tightening on Tibet. "In the last few weeks, we have seen an increasingly repressive political climate on Tibet as Beijing emphasizes its domination of the region," (Kate Saunders, a spokeswoman for the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet). "It's difficult to discern the intentions of the senior leadership on the ongoing dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and Beijing" (Kate Saunders).

 Also seen in the news is using the media to oppress Tibet, and the rest of China for that matter. As we all know, China has a Communist regime and censors most form of media and internet usage. However, in the little amount of uncensored media allowed throughout China, the Dalai Lama is always slandered and his name is put to shame. Any form, of expressionism is severely frowned upon in China as well. For example, in August of 2006, “…authorities shut down the blogs of a well-known Tibetan writer who posted a photograph of the Dalai Lama and wished him a happy birthday, his 71st” (Fan). By doing this China controls both the religion and political viewpoints of the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and everyone who practices Tibetan Buddhism or looks up to the Dalai Lama as a role model.

 In 1959 the world witnessed the first example of Tibetan uprisings against the Chinese regime. These were mostly peaceful protests that ended with unnecessary violence. For example in 2008, the same year the Olympics were being held, Tibetans attempting to raise awareness about the situation began starting commotion in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa. This commotion later turned into violence and spread throughout the entirety of Tibet and into parts of China. In Lhasa, the Tibetan people set police cars, fire engines, and Han businesses ablaze. It was also reported that Hui Muslim shops were also torched, including one of the most important Muslim markets in China/Tibet: Tsomtsikhang. This was also the first time that the protests spread outside of Tibet and into Nepal and China.

 Much can be said about the violence occurring in Tibet. One of the most recent occurrences of violence or drastic protests comes directly from the monks and nuns within the monasteries in Tibet. Since January of this year there have been twelve reports of monks and nuns performing self-immolations. In short, monks are setting themselves on fire in order to bring attention to the conflict. Along with this there have been several mass protests throughout the region against China’s “cultural genocide.” The Dalai Lama has even spoken out about the genocide and the “urgency of the situation in Tibet.”

 There is also irrefutable evidence that the Chinese government has kidnapped the 11th Panchen Lama (the Panchen Lama plays a major role in the selection of the next Dalai Lama). The 11th Panchen Lama is considered the youngest political prisoner (born 1989). It has been reported that China intends to hold the Panchen Lama to protect him from the Tibetan people. It’s not stated why he needs to be protected from the Tibetan people but it is widely believed that he is being held because of his status as chooser of the next Dalai Lama. The new Chinese government wants the privilege of choosing the next Dalai Lama. Consider, however how this move will affect Tibetan-Chinese relations: China believes that it should play an active role in the appointment of the next Dalai Lama. There is some historical precedent for this belief as the Chinese maintain that the sixth Dalai Lama was appointed by the Qing dynasty Emperor Kangxi. Tsering Yangdzom, an ethnic Tibetan at the China Tibetology Research Center, has cited that the appointment of the sixth Dalai Lama in support of China’s paradoxical conviction that the Chinese government should elect the Dalai Lama’s successor. China has long opposed the very institution of the Dalai Lama. As a matter of fact, a new Chinese law was passed not too long ago stating that no Tibetan was allowed to reincarnate without permission from the government. These new laws and the kidnapping of the Panchen Lama is doing nothing but widening the gap between the two countries, causing more disdain and resentment from Tibet towards China.

 “There is always a bad apple in the group, someone that makes protests for positivity, negative” (personal interview). What this statement is getting at there is always someone who puts a spin on the situation to make it negative, or positive, but in this case negative. In this case it is both the Chinese people and the American people. Americans and Tibetans alike can say that China faces an ethnic intolerance of sorts. Unlike in America and other democracies, China does not have a freedom of protest/assembly clause in their constitution. However, Americans can also say that bias towards Tibet and their human rights is occuring. “The Chinese public's frustration at the western media's apparent anti-Chinese bias with regard to the reporting of the recent unrest in Tibet is understandable. The Lhasa riots of 14 March 2008 claimed several innocent Chinese lives and the destruction of many properties and businesses. But the Chinese public should not be blinded from an understanding of the wellsprings of the protest” (Fitzherbert). This statement means that there is fault on both sides. China, on the one hand, is suppressing its people to the point of violence and blaming the Dalai Lama for it all. Tibet, on the other hand, is “trying to cover up the violence” with bias news coverage from the Western world; “playing the victim,” which they are.Lobsang Sangay was asked a question from a reporter about Sangay’s assertion that the Tibetans who self-immolated called for “freedom for Tibetans or freedom in Tibet”.   The question was regarding whether the calls were for “freedom” or for “independence” and what difference this might make China’s policies.

 Sangay first noted that his election platform clearly supported the Middle Way policy of seeking autonomy rather than independence.  He also noted that the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has passed three resolutions supporting the Middle Way, and that therefore this is the democratically-chosen policy of the Chinese government.
 Sangay then said that, with respect to the self-immolators, he read that only one self-immolator actually called for independence, but that everyone is entitled to their view. Sangay stated that a “majority [of self-immolators] seem to be saying freedom for Tibetans or freedom in Tibet”.  He also noted that in a democratic society, there is freedom of speech so Tibetans should have the right to express other views.

The United States also faces a morality gap in this situation. Because China is one of the most powerful trading nations in the world, America wants to keep relations strong with the land of China. In this situation we can only say that we are only looking out for ourselves and our own interests. Also, the United States government has two different strategies for dealing with Tibet and China. “At the strategic level, the United States has consistently supported the Chinese position that Tibet is part of China. At the pragmatic or tactical level, Washington has been opportunistic in its dealings with Tibet and has been prone to wide fluctuations, ranging from the provision of financial and military aid to Tibetan guerrilla forces in the 1950s and 1960s to neglect and almost no official contact in the 1970s and 1980s” (Goldstein). The United States may want to help Tibet but the United States won’t. It is not in our best interests to help Tibet because the government would lose China as a trade partner.

It may seem that the US does not want to help Tibet but there have been attempts at trying to get the government to at least recognize that Tibet is a sovereign, autonomous country. In 1959, after the first reported uprising, the current Dalai Lama sent numerous requests to the United States government recognize Tibet as its own country. Tibetans were and still are calling for recognition by the United States, the UN and many other big name countries. “I believe that United States recognition of the Dalai Lama's government as that of an independent country would not serve well. Consequently, despite the Cold War and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile, the U.S. government continued to believe that American interests were best served by adhering to the position that Tibet was part of Communist-controlled China” (Goldstein). Obliviously it can be seen here that the US is not going to recognize Tibet as a country anytime soon.

From the Chinese perspective, Tibet has always been a part of China. “This is, of course, a simplistic and inaccurate view, but Tibetan history is so muddled that one can see in it what one wishes” (Hessler). The Chinese can ignore some periods in history and point to others supporting their claim. Particularly in 1792, the year a Qing Emperor sent an entire army to help repel the ferocious Nepalese army. There were also *ambans*, political officials, stationed in Tibet from 1728-1912. History cannot be erased, even an ethnic genocide cannot erase history. So, even though human rights may be at stake, history throws all of that aside. China has so many centuries upon centuries of both oppression and protection of Tibet that what’s going on now almost seems minute.

 But these hundreds of years of oppression can be assuaged because the requests from Lobsang Sangay, the new Tibetan Prime Minister, still continue. The Prime Minister has sent numerous reports to US officials pressuring them to put pressure on China over recent self-immolations by ethnic Tibetans. “Sangay stated that in order to resolve the issue of Tibet, there is no constitutional, institutional, or territorial problem.  Rather, he cast the issue as a problem, from China’s perspective, of Tibetans’ distinct identity and “ethnicity”.  He also reiterated that Tibetan envoys are ready to meet with the Chinese government “any place, any time”’ (Editorial Board). Sangay later argued that Tibet has very strong institutions and very strong beliefs. Unlike, Hong Kong and Macao, who returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999, Tibet does not need “Hong-Kong-like institutions” to attain sovereignty. Lastly, Sangay stated that there is no territorial problem because Tibetans are not asking for independence.  He did not, however, address the “…Chinese fear that giving Tibetans autonomy would allow them space to push for independence” (Editorial Board).

Sangay concluded by asking, rhetorically, what the problem was. If there is no constitutional, institutional, or territorial problem, why doesn’t China give Tibet autonomy? China gave Macao and Hong-Kong autonomy and is offering Taiwan a similar status. Sangay stated that because Macao, Hong-Kong and Taiwan are ethnic Chinese, or Han Chinese the Chinese can have sovereignty. Sangay went on to say that China will not treat Tibet the same, because we’re Tibetans and not Han Chinese” (Editorial Board).

In recent months, the Chinese government has spent “big money” to keep the fervor about controlling the country and Tibet. China is spending this money in order to keep the population under control. The party has created an extensive police and surveillance network to monitor its citizens and react to any potential threat to stability," the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission stated in a report. As we all know, in January of this year the popular Arab Spring conflicts in the Middle East have sparked much controversy and much support for the oppressed. In order to avoid the world’s attention, China has enforced stricter rules on the media in Tibet.

 Ultimately, the current gap between the negotiating positions of Tibetan exiles and the Chinese government boils down to a disputed interpretation of the correct boundaries of Tibet. It seems as though the Chinese government is nervous about establishing a new autonomous region because it may be the first step towards a push total independence by all Tibetan region. These accusations are probably the cause of the Chinese government’s suggestions that the Dalai Lama is “less genuine” in his suggestions against independence. The Dalai Lama has continually stated, however, that he envisions autonomy for all Tibetans. It is even stated in the Chinese Constitution which states when minority nationalities live in compact communities, ‘organs of self- government are to be established for the exercise of the right of autonomy.’

Taking the Chinese constitution as a starting point, we need to re-conceive how Tibet is governed in China. The current border of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is an artificial one. If the goals of stability and genuine autonomy are to be realized, this border must be reviewed/re-drawn. In the past couple of years a ‘three-state solution’ has been brought to the table. This three state structure could possibly satisfy the Tibetan government-in-exile while still allowing the Chinese government to prevent a complete breakaway by Tibet.

The province of Qinghai corresponds to the traditional Tibetan region of Amdo, and remains predominantly Tibetan. Tibetans also represent 90 percent of many Qinghai areas. The remainder of the Plateau is known as Kham, to Tibetans. Autonomy for Tibetans requires that Tibetans from Amdo and Kham enjoy autonomy just like central Tibetans (three-state structure).

It has also been asked why Tibet would even want autonomy. Would Tibet really be better off without Mother China there looking over them? Many citizens in Tibet enjoy the economic successes of Communist China. Tibet enjoys the few benefits that China gives. Many Tibetans also enjoy the new changes that China has made such as, the railroad or even the governmental control. By asking China for autonomy, the Tibetan people may have surrendered more rights than being just part of China. “By asking the Communist Chinese for an official agreement to have autonomous status for Tibet, we will be surrendering many of the rights we are now entitled to and locking ourselves into a constricted and precarious situation forever from which we cannot withdraw (Shakabpa). ” Tibetans will face restrictions such as: Buddhism will be under strict scrutiny from Chinese government, promotion of Tibetan culture in other regions will be stifled by China, foreign investments in Tibet will be controlled by China, and (most importantly) China will essentially control Tibet’s ecological environment. The Dirchu and Machu rivers flow through Tibet into China where they become the Yangtse and Huang Ho rivers, respectively. China will claim the Machu and Dirchu rivers explaining that they directly affect the Yangtse and Huang Ho rivers, giving them power over Tibetan agriculture.

As a whole, however, Tibetans feel that they are too suppressed by China. Tibetans are not allowed to practice their religion, faith, or culture. This is why they want autonomy, they may have more restrictions, but they will freely be allowed to practice their faith

With all the evidence gathered throughout this paper, the author believes that Tibet should receive autonomy. Actually, the Dalai Lama is not even calling for complete independence from China, he is calling for suzerainty, that is, Tibet wants limited domestic freedoms, a step towards complete independence. Hypothetically speaking, if Tibet were to receive autonomy, or suzerainty, Tibet and China would hopefully be able to solve their problems/differences and become two separate nations.

Religiously/ spiritually speaking, Tibetan autonomy will also benefit the western world. As of right now, people are allowed to exit and enter Tibet. However, there are restrictions; the borders are all guarded. If and when Tibet receives autonomy, westerners and easterners alike will be able to exit and enter at ease. This freedom would also open up the spiritual world to the west, even more so than it already does. Westerners will be able to visit the monasteries and temples in Tibet and allow their spirits to open up.

Another reason for Tibetan autonomy would be the decrease it hatred. The Dalai Lama would stop having his name slandered and he would be able to devote 100% of his time to helping people, Westerners included, find their way along the spiritual path. And in the end that’s what many want: a peaceful world without conflict between two formerly peaceful, harmonious nations.

If Tibet does not receive autonomy, we will see more of what is already occurring. We will see monks and nuns perform self-immolations, we will see more protests, many of which are opposed by the Chinese military. This means that the military will suppress the protests and some of them will erupt into violence. In fact a protest in Lhasa erupted in violence a few weeks ago. With violence, comes more violence. Peace talks will never continue or be successful if violence and suppression continues in Tibet. Tibet and China are experiencing a great deal of hate, totally against the Buddhist way, in Tibet. “Hatred doesn’t cease with hatred, only love…” The Buddha.

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