Tibet Policy Journal

The Tibet Policy Institute

Preface

It remains to be seen whether the readers are convinced if all articles contained in this edition make a cohesive and coherent sense to deserve the label of a special volume. Nevertheless, it is a modest attempt on our part to bring Tibet into a sharper focus and to foreground Tibet in a year that would be remembered, above all for disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Even from our perch in Dharamshala, events around the world appear to be happening at an accelerated pace. Although the pandemic has compelled nations in most part of the world to curtail movements of people, it still had little bearing on events that continue to hit the bedrocks of global order. One such event is the border standoff between India and China in Ladakh. Debates surrounding this unfortunate event led to further interrogation and it took a little scratching of the surface to reveal the relevance of Tibet.

It was under such circumstances, a phrase from Dawa Norbu's academic paper *Centrality of the Marginality* regained a regenerated vitality. We felt it worthwhile to revisit his ideas and his academic pursuit to recentre Tibet. It is with this objective that we wanted to tease his ideas further, update new data and formulate new conceptual understanding.

When the initial idea was put on the table, it was decided that the volume could be titled Recentering the Margins. In other words, to understand the resilience of the periphery. With these ideas in head, we approached my colleague, Tenzin Lhadon la to distil these ideas and to draft a concept note. With a concept note in hand, I shot a series of mails to a number of Tibetan scholars to contribute to this volume. The response was very positive, but eventually quite a few dropped-out owing to their prior commitments. Those who managed to put together a paper and submitted it to me by the tail-end of the year are here in print.

I would like to leave a corrective note to an assertion I made in a preface to the preceding issue of this journal. Where I have sort of said that Tibet in Anthropocene is undergoing "geological, climactic, social, cultural and political transformation." In this, I have cluttered different scales of time, which is what Dipesh Chakrabarty has described as "time-knot." This is to confuse the scales of time in terms of planetary and human history.

Over the years, we hope we have made steady strides in improving the quality of this journal. It was felt that it would be beneficial for the final drafts submitted to me to undergo a discussion with peers, proverbial holding feet to the fire. Hence, all the papers published here went through a double-blind peer review process. I remain grateful to all the anonymous reviewers for carefully considering the paper given for review and reverting back with thoughtful comments. I hope you all will continue to associate with our institute in future.

When all the papers were put together in a folder, a colleague of mine suggested that *Recentering Tibet* as the title for this special volume sounded too reified and academic. It wasn't until the last minute that the immediacy to come up with a title and let's say, de-verbose the title became an urgent necessity. I have finally settled on *Foregrounding Tibet*. Be that as it may, I hope it conveys the objectives of our collective exercise which we envisioned during the initial phase of this project.

After a brief hiatus, Dr Tenzin Tsultrim la resumed his work at our office. His enthusiasm upon his return is marked by an instance when he managed to write an entire opinion piece with all the hyperlinks attached through his mobile phone. His assistance and humour during the editing process is immensely appreciated.

It would be remiss not to acknowledge my colleague, Ngawang Choekyi la for her diligent typesetting of the papers included here. On top of her previous engagements, she managed to carefully fit the documents and provided a tangible form that rests in your hand as you read this. Thank You! And also, I would to thank our current Director of the Tibet Policy Institute, Tenzin Lekshay la for his patient oversight during the course of this project.

I would like to end this short preface with an appeal. This is to encourage you and your peers to contribute to the next issue of the journal. Please do get in touch with me for submissions through email addressed to the editor.

Tenzin Desal
Dharamshala, 2020

CONTENT

Shadowing Networks: Note Towards Reconfiguration of Tibetan Institutions in Exile and Archipelagic Diaspora [1]

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Abstract

Do the state-society relations comprehensively explain the dynamics of revival of Buddhism in Tibet? Does the framing of this question change in an authoritarian and colonial context? In addressing these questions, an opposite conclusion could be reached where existing sociological assumptions on Civil Society which Alexis de Tocqueville greatly admired in the United States could be turned on its head in China. For instance, Civil Society could be put to service in the *Art of Political Control in China* (Mattingly 2019). However, the revival of Buddhism in Tibet after the Cultural Revolution in Tibet cannot be comprehensively explained by the dynamics of the state-society relations. Even in an authoritarian and colonized context as is the case in Tibet, where the presence of state is palpable in everyday lives, politics and religion. This paper offers a conceptual framework for diaspora studies by examining a practice amongst refugee and diaspora community where the stateless and refugee population exerts its agency by shadowing of preexisting nodes and networks. The success of the process of shadowing network is contingent on geographical and temporal proximity to the state and network it shadows. Through primary sources available in Tibetan on monastic institutions in India and diaspora and more recent ethnographic studies carried out in Tibet, it examines the role of shadowing networks in the revival of Buddhism and monastic institutions in post-Mao Tibet. It concludes by urging future Tibetan diaspora studies to think in archipelagic terms.

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1. During the course of writing this paper, I became aware that this exercise would have benefited from a field visit and there lies the limitation of this paper. But this I have tried to remedy by relying on recent ethnographic studies in Tibet. My extended field visit to Sera Jey School, where I served as a part-time teacher in 2010 for over eight months has also informed this study. I also wanted to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments.

Introduction

Scholars continue to grapple with the understanding of refugeehood and statelessness. Hannah Arendt's clarity in theorizing is an important scholarly intervention that opened up new line of academic enquiry. Her works continue to raise questions on the challenges faced by refugees and the conceptual understanding of refugeehood and statelessness(Bradley 2014). Civil war in Syria and the European ''refugee crisis'' has turned certain scholars to Arendt to reflect on a contemporary crisis (Mahrdt 2017; Hirsch & Bell, 2017). Hannah Arendt's oeuvre on the subject was developed under the shadow of rise of totalitarianism and draws our attention to the plight of refugees. She offers historical analysis of European nation states, forced migration, refugeehood and statelessness.[2]

Arendt's work challenges the dichotomous conclusion of other scholars, and instead viewed refugeehood and statelessness as two sides of the same coin (Bradley 2014, 102). As Giorgio Agamben illustrates on Arendt's fifth chapter of the book on Imperialism dedicated to the refugees:

> This formulation-which inextricably links the fates of the rights of man and the modern national state, such that the end of the latter necessarily implies the obsolescence of the former-should be taken seriously. The paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man par excellence, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept(Agamben 2013, 116).

The thrust of Arendt's arguments is still valuable and continue to

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2. One couldn't resist but to point out the resemblance in the title of Arendt's essay, *We Refugees* (Arendt 2007)and that of the first complete Tibetan work in English, *We Tibetans, by Rinchen Lhamo* (Lhamo 1926). She is the first known Anglo-Tibetan couple and was berated by superiors for 'insufficiently civilized for the position of a consul's wife.' Provincialized Europe here please! Her writing is a rich material for a search for a Tibetan self and encounters of a cosmopolitan Tibetan woman.

resonate(Arendt 2001).[3]However, in this paper on top of rescuing her work from Euro-centrism, I look at a way through which Tibetan refugees as a stateless people assert agency by examining their experiences, interpretation and practices.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched into Eastern Tibet and declared "peaceful liberation of Tibet." After the signing of the 17-Point-Agreement, which is contested as to have been signed under duress,[4] the relation between Tibet and China went through phases chronicled in Goldstein's four-volume work on modern Tibetan history(Goldstein 1991; 2012; 2014; 2019).[5] Ten years later, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) crushed the Tibetan National Uprising in the capital, Lhasa. H.H. the Dalai Lama (hereafter the Dalai Lama) fled Tibet followed by over 80,000 Tibetans and crossed the Himalayas to take refuge in India, Nepal and Bhutan. In 1960, among the refugee population, the Dalai Lama re-established the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGiE) in the Indian hill station of Dharamshala. The last comprehensive demographic survey conducted by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has reported that the Tibetan diaspora numbers 128,000, which comprise 74% of its population living in self-contained settlements or scattered communities in India(Planning Council, 2009).

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3. It must be stated here that Arendt's position on refugeehood couldn't be reduced to her writing in one book(Arendt 2001) cited here. For a more nuanced study on refugeehood and statelessness, it is recommended to look at her larger body of work.
4. Goldstein explains this episode by stating that Tibet has "grudgingly accepted Chinese sovereignty for the first time in its history"(Goldstein 2012, p. xi). However, a report submitted to the International Commission of Jurists conclude that through the repudiation of this treaty by the Dalai Lama, Tibet legally "discharged herself of the obligation under the Agreement", see(Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet 1960).
5. Goldstein's prodigious scholarly output is not without its critics. Jamyang Norbu, in a two-part essay calls out Goldstein's attempt to "skilfully isolate and magnify those grey areas in Tibetan history and current affairs..."(Norbu J. 2008). For a scholarly review of Goldstein's more accessible work in a single volume, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*(1997), Kloose on critical reading of this work contends that "because of its continuing influence, it is important not to let some of its more tenuous assumptions pass unchallenged." See(Kloose 2014).

Available literature on Tibetan diaspora is replete with studies on Tibetans as stateless community, negotiating identity, citizenship and refugeehood (Subba 1990; Anand 2000; Brox 2012; McGranahan C. 2016; Gupta 2019). Further scholarship, as argued by Fiona McConnel problematizes the dualist thinking and conventional mapping of citizen and refugee over the concepts of statehood and statelessness. From her fieldwork among Tibetan refugee community, she asserts:

> With their own government structure operating within the state of India—albeit without legal recognition exile Tibetans are simultaneously "Tibetan citizens" in the eyes of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, "refugees" in the eyes of many within the international community, and "foreign guests" in the eyes of the Indian state (McConnell 2013, 967).

Diaspora, a term mainly attributed to Jewish and Armenian communities has slipped into literature on Tibetan refugees. The wholesale importation of this word and its meaning in Tibetan context went on without much examination. Dibyesh Anand took a recourse to this and brought the term Tibetan diaspora under critical examination. Following trends and applying ideas from social, cultural and literary theory, studies on Tibetan diaspora and the usage of the term diaspora gained currency in 1980s as an analytical category. Anand concerns himself within the studies among Tibetanists, a label he uses to describe scholars working in areas concerned with Tibet and Tibetans, who "has some overlap with, but ultimately differs from, the Tibetan intellectual community"(Anand 2003, 211). Although acknowledging the growing "self-confidence" in the field of Tibetan Studies, he finds it "problematic" to use the term "diaspora" as a mere synonym or substitute for "refugee" or "exile." Anand contends that Tibetanists began to use the term only in response to recent re-conceptualizations of 'Diaspora,' and to which the term has "become more capacious and has moved beyond the classical application of it (to Jews, Greeks, and Armenians) to refer to numerous other communities"(Anand 2003, 211). Here he addresses the "under-theorization" of the term Diaspora as it encounters Tibet specific "historical and cultural contexts" and offers an explanation drawing inspiration from Edward Said (1983) and the concept of "travelling theory."

With specific reference to the theoretical category of Diaspora, it is not surprising that the concept has travelled. It has travelled beyond the confines of its Jewish-centred definition to charted and uncharted, familiar as well as strange territories. Inevitably, by the time Diaspora came to be used for the Tibetans, the term not only contained the reality of Tibetan exile community and the remnants of classical definitions, but also the constitutive traces of its travel among several theoretical fields as well as among several formations that have adopted the label of Diaspora. As a trace of titanium in an iron alloy can transform its properties, so also the contacts between the concept Diaspora and specific historical and cultural contexts have had constitutive influence on its present-day meaning (Anand 2003, 213).

More recent literature on Tibetan diaspora and more specifically on Majnu-Ka-Tilla, an informal refugee colony of Tibetans in New Delhi, ethnographic study (Balasubramaniam & Gupta 2019) has looked at the changing discourse and language from refugee to rights in the settlement of their fieldwork. The study explores Majnu ka Tilla within the urban political process as a part of municipality and argues that discriminatory planning decisions have led to "ghettoization". It further looks into the process of Residents Welfare Association (RWA) leveraging on formal municipal process of regularisation of unauthorised colonies to carve a legitimate space for itself within the city (Balasubramaniam & Gupta 2019, 99).

This paper, without the benefit of a field data, reexamines available literature to explore an aspect of agentive practices of a population bereaved of citizenship and affiliation to a modern nation-state. As earlier scholarship on refugeehood and statelessness has pointed out that they are in essence two sides of a same coin. This paper offers a conceptual framework for diaspora studies by examining a practice amongst refugee and diaspora community where the stateless and refugee population exerts its agency by shadowing of preexisting ideas of temporality, nodes and networks. The success of the process of shadowing network is contingent on geographical and temporal proximity to the state and network it shadows. Through primary sources available in Tibetan on monastic institutions in India and more recent

ethnographic studies carried out in Tibet, it examines the salience and role of shadowing networks in the revival of Buddhism and monastic institutions in post-Mao Tibet.

Refugee Agency and Shadowing Networks

In a complete book-length study on the Tibetan-Government-in-Exile, Fiona McConnell suggests rethinking of existing work on state spaces and its practices in state/non-state relations. Building on the notion of rehearsal from dramaturgy, she explores the interplay of space, time and performative aspects of stateness and appeals to "pause" and "to consider both the everyday practicalities and the wider repercussions of what is going on..."(McConnell 2016, 2).

Part of earlier studies on Tibetan refugees could be characterized by study on its success in forming a refugee community. This is best exemplified in an effusive preface to an ethnographic work by anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf. From his field study in Nepal and India, Fürer-Haimendorf writes that the "Tibetan refugees found an environment suitable for the recreation of the monastic life which had been characteristic of the Tibetan social and religious system." And to be able to build "numerous monasteries of a remarkably high architectural standard and their success in developing viable monastic communities similar to those in Tibet (emphasis added)," is to him " one of the miracles of the twentieth century"(Fürer-Haimendorf 1990).

For Tibetan scholar, Dawa Norbu, the success of Tibetan exile community and its transition from "trauma to successful settlement" hinged on three structural factors:

1. Humanitarian Work and Political Compensation

2.Coordination Among NGOs

3.Indeginous Leadership and Social Organization in Tibetan Refugee Society (Norbu 2001, 9-11)

Norbu points to salience in Tibetan rehabilitation that contributed to the overall success of Tibetan settlement. Here, he emphasized on the indigenous leadership and organization that emerged out of social and

political structures (Norbu D. 2001, 11). It is this process that this paper is interested in locating and then framing it conceptually to explain the structural bedrocks for a successful rehabilitation in its early years. An attempt to explain how this indigenous leadership relied on available resources in an alien social world to organize itself and relied on existing networks to navigate its way in early years of refugeehood and the formation of Tibetan diaspora.

The opposition in Westminster political systems, the opposition leader and a group of members of parliament in the House of Commons, individually and collectively "shadow" the ruling party or a coalition. The opposition follows respective government departments and questions them on the workings of respective departments and their policy initiatives. This competitive framework provides the voters to follow closely in a more discernible fashion to understand adversarial and alternative politics. This empowers the lawmakers in the opposition as Shadow Government (Johnson 1997).

Building on this concept where the leaders of the main opposition party shadow the ministers of the ruling party/coalition, China and India had engaged since 1910 in a practice of competitive shadowing states in the Eastern Himalayas. Bérénice Guyot-Réchard (2017, 4) argues that in the erstwhile North–East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (present-day Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Assam), India's attempt to establish a foothold in the region "collided" with China's expansionist agenda in Tibet. In this process, both modern states -- the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China resorted to "'mutual observation, replication and competition to prove themselves the better state"(Guyot-Réchard 2017, 4). This, Guyot observes that both India and China saw each other in the image of "shadow states" in the Himalayas (Guyot-Réchard 2017, 5).

I pose a question about the cultural and political practices of a people when the centre goes missing. That in Tibet's case, the colonization of Tibet and the formation of a refugee and diasporic community. For this, I latch on to Dawa Norbu's third category of structural reasons for a successful Tibetan exile community, which to Norbu was its "indigenous

leadership and social organization in Tibetan refugee society." It should be cautioned that shadowing described here is not Homi Bhabha's "mimicry." Which, to Bhabha in colonial discourse at once points to "resemblance and menace" and one that privileges its own superiority (Bhabha 1984, 127) and emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge (Bhabha 1984, 126). I suggest that the political and social organization of Tibetan refugees drew on existing ideas on temporality, networks, nodes and institutions to consciously shadow networks and temporality. This shadowing operates in two visible modes, that is shadowing of the temporality and shadowing of institutions and practices. The main concern of this paper is to look at the practices of shadowing and not the legitimacy and legalist approach. For this, there is already a discernable literature, most notably reports by the International Commission of Jurists (1960) and Michael C. van Walt van Praag's *Status of Tibet* (1987).

Shadowing Temporality

A term that is often used to describe the uprising of 1959,[6] when Tibet witnessed radical political, social and cultural shift in Tibet due to the advent of the People's Liberation Army into Tibet is described as, changed time in Tibet (Wylie. *bod du dus 'gyur*).[7] Owing to restrictions in the practice of writing Tibetan history in People's Republic of China (Powers 2004; Turek 2019), representation of time has gained political significance in shaping of Chinese state's discourse. For instance, two important works on Tibetan history published in contemporary Tibet -- An Annal of All-Illuminating Mirror (Wylie. *deb ther kun gsal me long*) and the Necklace of Turquoise (Wylie: *bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*) abruptly ends in 1959 as *heralding of era of happiness for the Tibetan people* (Wylie. *bod mi dmangs la bde skyid nyi ma shar ba*)(Tshering

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6. In 2009, a new state-sponsored commemoration to mark the 50th anniversary of China's defeat of the Tibetan National Uprising in Lhasa was instituted. On 28th March, it was introduced just months after large-scale protests erupted across Tibet in 2008. In January 2009, the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) "voted" to establish "Serf Emancipation Day" Séagh Kehoe(2020 1-2).
7. Variants of such expressions are found in different parts of Tibet. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out *collapse of time in Tibet* (Wylie. *bod du dus log pa*). This I confirmed it during my discussions with other Tibetan scholars.

1987, 466; Phuntsok 1991, 725). After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the new state in no time discarded the five time zones that had existed during the Nationalist period. To replace it, it regularized a Beijing time, a one-size-fits-all standard time across the nascent People's Republic of China.[8]

Temporality is a bundle of fragmented times. In other words, if time is used to describe particular moments, then temporality is the passage of time. Temporality is a way by which 'now' moments 'connect' and relate to other periods in a backward (past) and forward (future) direction (Kehoe 2020, 2; Dawson 2014, 286). Ordering of time and ideas on temporality are shaped by political, social, cultural and practices (Chakrabarty 2000, 7). It is also a preoccupation of scholars working in a range of disciplines to consider the ideas of time in the construction of state, identities and discourses (Renan, 2018; Anderson, 1983; Appiah, 2018). For Michel Foucault, time is political and creates temporal "ordering of things" which regulates "actions across space and bodies"(Foucault, 1970, 320). Considering the question of Nationalism, Benedict Anderson writes that it is built along a shared sense of "a solid community moving steadily down history"(Anderson, 1983, 26).

I am fully aware of the possibility of offering a better explanation on shadowing temporality by drawing on dramaturgical literature and Fiona McConnell's idea on "rehearsing" the state (2016). However, it may suffice by settling on a working definition and perfectly serviceable for the purpose here, which is, shadowing temporality as an agentive practice and exertion of temporal authority on witnessing a rupture in time by shadowing practices relying on preexisting ideas of temporality, networks and nodes.

After escaping Lhasa on 17 March, 1959, the Dalai Lama along with his entourage first intended to "repudiate the Seventeen-Point 'Agreement', " and "re-establish" the "Government as the rightful administration of all Tibet, and try to open negotiations with the Chinese" on reaching

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8. Scholars Jonathan Hassid and Bartholomew C. Watson (2014) addresses the question -- "why does China, geographically the third largest country in the world, have only one time zone, while Australia, nearly as big, has six?"

Lhuntze Dzong, close to the Indian border (Gyatso 1990, 141). On hearing news that the "Chinese had begun to shell the Norbulingka and to machine-gun the defenceless [Tibetan] crowd," the Dalai Lama formally repudiated the Seventeen-Point 'Agreement' and announced the formation of his Government, the "only legally constituted authority in the land."(Gyatso 1990, 141).

Crossing into the Indian border, the Dalai Lama at a press conference held in Mussoorie on 20 July, 1959,[9] he again repudiated the Seventeen-Point 'Agreement' on the ground that China had herself broken the terms of the agreement and there was no longer "any legal basis for recognising it." Soon after he set about creating new Tibetan government departments which included Offices of Information, Education, Rehabilitation, Security, Religious Affairs and Economic Affairs (Gyatso 1990, 153). After reaching Dharamshala in April 1960, the Dalai Lama continued reforming Tibetan Administration and began the process of democratization. The formation of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile is shadowing of temporality and temporal authority. As evident in this process, the Tibetan government that has been dismantled by the Chinese colonial administration has led to reconfiguration of Tibetan Government-in-Exile by shadowing the government, networks and ideas of Tibetan territoriality.

Shadowing of temporality is not unique to Tibetans as existing literature on governments-in-exile has illustrated how they drew its legitimacy and structural cohesion by working on a template that existed earlier before the rupture in time caused by political forces. It has been noted that most governments-in-exile and their sojourn in exile are relatively short such as the National Coalition of the Union of Burma (1990-2012), in other cases, it is protracted. Such as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in Algerian territory in 1976 and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), which enjoys the observer status in the United Nations since 1974 (McConnell 2016, 21).

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9. A website to memorialize by collecting oral accounts and photos with accompanying maps, see (Norbu J.).

Shadowing Institutions

Shadowing of institutions rely on indigenous leadership and existing social structures to innovate and improvise on institutions that existed before the colonization of Tibet. This process of innovative improvisation is best exemplified in the democratization of the exile Tibetan governance. The best model for shadowing of institutions and networks in Tibetan diasporic experience is found in the shadowing of monastic networks. This is deserving of analytical attention and sharper focus on its own standing.

The democratization process of the Tibetan governance in exile is I argue, not a wholesale aping of the existing models it consulted. The host government, India boasts of its own vibrancy as the largest democracy in the world. Yet practice of democracy in exile requires navigating the "conundrum" around the "relationship between sovereignty and territory." A government that is "internationally unrecognised and lacks jurisdiction over territory both in the homeland and in exile" still functioning with the forms of "state-like" sovereign authority (McConnell 2016, 20-21).

TGiE now operates under the constitution-like 'Charter of Tibetans in Exile 'consisting of a legislative parliament with members elected from the diaspora, a judiciary (albeit with limited powers) and an executive body (the *Kashag*) in charge of seven governmental departments. The territorialisation of Tibet and emphasis on three *Cholkas* (three traditional regions of Tibet) to represent Tibet in diaspora has gained representative significance. In exile today, across India, Nepal and less so in Bhutan, monastic institutions were established with charismatic religious leaders who escaped Tibet after 1959. They led the movement to build religious institutions in exile and shadowed networks, practices and nodes that suffered erasure under Chinese colonialism in Tibet.

Monasteries and Shadowing Networks
The Duar Years

Among Tibetans seeking refuge in India, Nepal and Bhutan in 1959 were a group of scholars, lamas and Buddhist monks. Many initially labored in road-building projects in Indian borderlands along with lay Tibetans.

In recognition of the threat to scholarly tradition and Buddhist lineage dying out, the Dalai Lama negotiated with the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru to establish a non-sectarian (Wylie. *Ris med*) institution for 1,500 monks and nuns at a site that was a former British prison camp in Buxa Duar in a remote area of West Bengal[10](Brentano 2018, 21).

In the autobiography of the Dalai Lama, he recounts the conditions in two transit camps of Misamari and Buxa in Northeastern India:

> Both places were much lower than Mussoorie's elevation of 6,000 feet, so the heat was unmitigated. For although it can get quite hot in Tibet during summer, the air at the high-altitude people were used to was extremely dry, whereas on the Indian plains the heat is accompanied by high levels of humidity. This was not just uncomfortable for the refugees but all too often fatal. Diseases which were unknown to Tibetans proliferated in this new environment. Thus, on top of the danger of death from injuries sustained whilst escaping from Tibet, there was also danger of death from heat stroke and illnesses such as tuberculosis, which flourished under these conditions. Many succumbed.

Buddhist Networks in Exile

Buddhist networks in Tibet and the Himalayan region has received serious scholarly attention and aspects of connected histories, modes of expressing and navigating modern identities in the trans-Himalayan region has been studied by ethnographers along the Nepal and Indian Himalayas (Shneiderman 2015; Gohain 2020). Particular interest to this article, the operation of monastic networks had been pointed out on how the Ganden Phodrang government played its role in both spiritual and temporal authority in Kham society by a network of Gélukpa monasteries (Ryōsuke 2018). Similar network of lineage, monastic institutions, and authorities exist across traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

Monastic network in Tibetan diasporic experience offers best insight into

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10. For a multimedia documentary on Buxa Chogar, a documentary produced by Tibet TV and directed by a Tibetan filmmaker is available for free viewership on Tibet Tv's official YouTube Channel, Geleck Pasang (2020).

how the shadowing of network operates. The "socialist transformation" of Tibet has left little space for the practice and development of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet. The Cultural Revolution's direct assault on the "four olds" - old ideas, old customs, old habits and old culture led to destruction of monasteries carried out by the Red Guards. Whilst in exile, it witnessed proliferation of monastic institutions. The three-volume publication by the Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile enumerates over 261 monastic institutions established and administered by the Tibetan diasporic community.

Table 1. Exile Tibetan Monasteries as Compiled till 2011

Tradition	Numbers
Nyingma	77
Kagyu	69
Sakya	28
Geluk	66
Jonang	3
Rime	11
Yungdrung Bon	7
Total	261

Source: (Department of Religion and Culture 2011)

Scholars in Tibetan studies are aware of academic studies on endurance of bigger Geluk monastic institutions (Goldstein 1998; Cabezón & Dorjee 2019; Ryōsuke 2018; Nietupski 1999). Here I offer an example of a much smaller monastic institution.

The Rutog Lhundrup Choeding Gon (Wylie. *stod ru thog lhun grub chos sdings dgon*) is a stone's throw away from my school's playground in Choglamsar, Ladakh. For most of the exile Tibetan population in the region, this monastery served the community in conducting prayers and rituals (Wylie. *zhabs brtan*). A brief history of this monastery is available in a series titled *A History of Tibetan Monasteries in Exile* (Tib. *btsan byol bod mi'i dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus*), a three-volume compilation published by the Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration

in 2011. According to the entry on the monastery, the monastery was earlier under the patronage of Rutog Wangla (Wylie. *ru thog dbang la*). Under Ganden Tsewang, the administration of the monastery came under the purview of Sera Jey Monastery. The short entry then describes the destruction it underwent during the Cultural Revolution in Tibet and eventual restoration of monastery in Tibet. This is followed by the establishment and shadow sister monastery in exile in Ladakh:[11]

> During the Cultural Revolution, the monastic system was destroyed. From 1987, Venerable Lobsang Tenpa, Kalsang Wangchuk, a member of Rutog's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and others started rebuilding the monastery. The rebuilding of the monastery was completed in 1990 that included restoring of statues, depositing relics and Dhâraṇîs.[12] For the benefit of the followers, the religious activities resumed. New structures for monastic quarters and a storeroom were also built. Today, there are three novice and two ordained monks. The monastery bore the expenses of Lobsang Gyaltsen and Lobsang Choegyel in 1993 for their education at Sera Monastery. After the transformative year [emphasis added] of 1959, Lobsang Tenzin, Lobsang Pheldrup and Thupten Phuntsok, although there was already a small temple structure, in 1985, today under the deputation of Sera Jey monastery including Khenpo Jampa Gyatso there are over 20 Tibetan monks. Despite small prayer hall and more importantly they follow rules of Sera Jey monastery and monastic guidelines (Wylie: *bca' yig*)[13] of the Gelugpa tradition(Department of Religion and Culture 2011, 153-155).

The unnamed author of this entry on the history of the monastery doesn't clearly delineate the development and restoration of two monasteries. It ignores multi-sited development and strings the narrative in the development of namesake monasteries. One in exile in Ladakh and the other in post-Mao Tibet. The author inserts a temporal intervention

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11. Translations cited here are mine unless otherwise stated.
12. For a discussion on this practice in Tibet, see Yael Bentor(1995).
13. For a study on this genre of Tibetan literature and particularly in Gelug tradition, see Berthe Jansen(2018).

which could be translated into English as the transformative year. Describing the monastic organization before the colonization of Tibet, the author describes the preceding time as -- before the transformative year (Tib. *bod du dus 'gyur ma byung ba'i sngon*). The years that brought Chinese Revolution into Tibet and transformed Tibet beginning in Eastern Tibet in 1950s (Weiner 2020)

The translation of the brief history of the Rutog monastery provides an analytical framework for questions addressed in this paper. It offers insights into how shadowing of network operates as the monastery underwent destruction during the Cultural Revolution. That is how the establishment of the monastery shadows both temporality and institutional practices. The author is aware of the rupture in time and renders the ordering of time as before and after of "Changed time"(Tib. *bod du dus 'gyur*). It is also to be noted here that these two monastic institutions operated by shadowing of networks of larger monastic institutions by sending monks where Sera Monastery served as its node. It could be argued that when a history of many Tibetan monasteries in twentieth century were to be written, it will be, to borrow from Jane E. Caple's book -- "A tale of two monasteries"(Caple 2019, 141). A history of a monastery in two sites that shadows each other.

Shadowing Networks and Revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Post-Mao Tibet

Discussions surrounding practice of religion and revival of Buddhism in Tibet centres largely on the shifting policies and political dispensation of the time of the Chinese state. First of many studies on the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet is a volume edited by Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet* (1998).[14] Goldstein's essay in the volume argues that the monks in Drepung Monastery in Lhasa are caught between political and religious loyalties. He concludes from his field studies in early 1990s that the main dilemma facing the monastic leaders, who found "themselves embroiled in constant political tension and conflict they cannot control"(Goldstein 1998, 47).

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14. For studies on revival of Tibetan Buddhism, see Charlene Makley (2007); Dan Smyer Yü(2012); Koen Wellens(2010), Joshua Esler(2020).

The limitation of Goldstein's paper is that it foregrounds Chinese policies and assumes a statist position. In other words, to evoke a familiar phrase to scholars of state and society, Goldstein sees revival of Tibetan Buddhism like a Chinese state.[15] Here I do not wish to discard his arguments but to question this assumption and problematize by questioning -- Do the state-society relations comprehensively explain the dynamics of revival of Buddhism in Tibet? Does the framing of this question change in an authoritarian and colonial context? In addressing these questions, an opposite conclusion could be reached where existing sociological assumptions on Civil Society could be turned on its head in China. For instance, Civil Society could be put to service in the *Art of Political Control in China* (Mattingly 2019).

However, the revival of Buddhism in Tibet after the Cultural Revolution cannot be comprehensively explained by the dynamics of the state-society relations. Even in an authoritarian and colonized context as is the case in Tibet, where the presence of state is palpable in everyday lives, politics and religion. Here, the networks of Buddhist institutions that shadowed the monasteries that were destroyed during China's Great Leap Forward and in following decades during the Cultural Revolution played a crucial role in the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet. Number of monastic institutions in exile served to shadow its monasteries in Tibet as centres for higher learning, transmission of oral traditions and religious practices.

Another aspect of shadowing that emerged in contemporary Tibet is the changing patterns of patronage and economic subsistence of monastic institutions. Jane Caple in her ethnographic study in Amdo region from her fieldwork from 2008 to 2009 and regular field visits from 2012-2015 details a web of Geluk monastic networks operating in "less famous scholastic monasteries"(Caple 2019, 10). These "less famous" monasteries shadow the practices of economic patronage and self-sufficiency in exile as seen and witnessed by monks during their stay and visits to monasteries in exile, primarily in India. In locating the inspiration and legitimacy for reform, Caple observes that monks who have spent time in India are important transmitters of reformist ideas

15. Here I am referring to a foundational text by James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*(1998).

in their monasteries in Tibet:

This lama's reference to monks coming back from India highlights another important dynamic: many monks located the main inspiration and moral legitimacy for reforms in the business activities of the major Geluk monasteries in exile. As we saw earlier, it was after visiting India that Jamyang changed his thinking about monastic financing. When Jikmé spoke about the decision to abolish the *sertri* post at Rongwo, he said that although some people felt that it was inappropriate for a monk to do business, the Tibetan monks in India farmed, "so we thought it would be okay to do business." Other monks mentioned the shops, restaurants, and guesthouses run by Geluk monasteries in India as examples for Amdo monasteries to follow. This influence on the ideas of monks was acknowledged even by Lungtok—the monk who had presented economic reforms at his monastery as the only practical option, given state policy (Caple 2019, 60-61).

Archipelagic Diaspora and Conclusion

The shadowing of networks operates in a complimentary fashion in time and space. This is against dichotomous analytical assumptions that pervades modern Tibetan studies -- the binary of exile Tibetans and Tibetans in Tibet. Although a very useful analytical framework, however it fails to explain the migration of people, transmission of ideas and lineages and practices. The shadowing of networks in exile and in Tibet complements each other and questions such binary assumptions. Tibet in colonial context renders easy appeal to a tendency to interpret the practices and identity in relation to hegemonic power of the Chinese state. Ortner provides concepts where agency is recognized through two modalities. In one that is closely linked to power(Caple, 2019, 7). In the second modality, the agency is related to "ideas of intention, to people's (culturally constituted) projects in the world and their ability to engage and enact them." In this, people "defined by their own values and ideals, despite the colonial situation" (Ortner, 2006, 152). And in this modality, I argue shadowing of network is one such project.

The question of under-theorization of the term diaspora in Tibetan context has been taken up and Dibyesh offers a crucial starting point for

a conversation (2003). At a conference among young Tibetan scholars in mid-2010s, certain scholars expressed reservation to the application of the term "Diaspora" to the Tibetans in South Asia. However, it could be argued that the experience of Tibetan refugeehood in itself is diasporic in nature. Diaspora, true to its original meaning in Greek--dispersion, Tibetan refugees initially dispersed primarily into three countries India, Nepal and Bhutan. Concerns raised over the use of the term diaspora among certain scholars at the aforementioned conference stemmed from the assumption that the wholesale application of the term diaspora could "depoliticize" the nature of their refugeehood. Which is the Chinese state violence on Tibetan population and the ensuing forced-migration. I emphasize that the terms "refugee" and "diaspora" are not mutually exclusive. Instead, in order to capture the narratives of Tibetans who migrated beyond their refugee settlements in South Asia, Tibetan diaspora studies should in time leave space for their stories, experiences and practices to be accommodated.

With Archipelagic Diaspora, I suggest an approach to the study of diaspora by emphasizing on the ontology of Tibetan diaspora. In literary studies of islands of Caribbean and Pacific, Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2001) coined the term 'Archipelagraphy' for remapping of marginalizing narratives. In what had been imagined as a series of isolated isles, archipelago renders "cartography of archipelagoes that maps the complex ebb and flow of immigration, arrival, and of island settlement"(DeLoughrey 2001, 23). Most publications in exile have so far been preoccupied by the exile population in three countries. In Dharamshala administrative parlance, it is referred to as *Gya-bel-druk-sum*, three countries of India, Nepal and Bhutan (Wylie. rgya bal 'brug gsum). Ostensibly three countries that is recognized geographically in South Asia. The latest data available to us on demographic distribution of exile Tibetan population reveals further scattering of exile Tibetan population. According to the best estimate in a report published in 2020, the exile Tibetans that have migrated to Europe and East Asia from South Asia has risen from 6,705 to 26379 and the population of Tibetans in North America is 36,098 (see table 2 and 3)(SARD, 2020). This accounts for near-parity in distribution of Tibetan diaspora between South Asia and in the West and South-East Asia. By not restricting

Tibetan diaspora confined to South Asia, this paper concludes by urging thinking on Tibetan diaspora in archipelagic terms where clusters of exile Tibetan population are scattered in different parts of the world.

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Appendix 1
Table 2. Tibetan population in Europe and East Asia

Country	2009 Tibetan Demographic Survey	2020	Variation
Austria	48	320	272
Belgium	863	5000	4137
Czech Republic	3	3	0
Denmark	48	100	100 [sic]
Finland	3	3	0
France	486	8000	7514
Germany	299	500	201
Hungary	15	15	0
Iceland	8	8	0
Ireland	15	50	35
Italy	144	70	-74
Luxemburg	23	23	0
Netherlands	65	1000	935
Norway	46 130 84	130	84
Poland	NA	40	40
Russia	40	25	-15
Spain	98	85	-13
Sweden	37	100	63
Switzerland & Liechtenstein	2891	8000	5109
United Kingdom	501	700	199
Europe Total	5585	24172	18587
Australia & New Zealand	545	1817	1272
Japan	176	110	-66
South Korea	23	40	17
Taiwan	376	240	-136
East Asia Total	575	390	-185
Total	6705	26379	19674

Source: (SARD 2020, 18).

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Appendix 2
Table 3. Number of Tibetans living in North America

Region	Population	Data Provided by Tibetan Association
Atlanta, USA	68	Actual
Capital Area Tibetan Association, USA	400	Actual
Ontario, Canada	8000	Estimate
Indiana (includes KY and OH), USA	37	Actual
Michigan, USA	27	Actual
Montana, USA	23	Actual
Northwest Tibetan Cultural Association, USA	700	Actual
Ottawa, Canada	75	Actual
Massachusetts, USA	160	Actual
New Mexico, USA	30	Actual
Chicago, USA	300	Actual
Connecticut, USA	400	Actual
Minnesota, USA	5000	Estimated
Alberta, Canada	700	Actual
Austin, USA	53	Actual
Boston, USA	700	Actual
Charlottesville, USA	105	Actual
Colorado, USA	400	Actual
Idaho, USA	6	Actual
Ithaca, USA	70	Actual
Northern California, USA	3000	Estimated
Philadelphia, USA	160	Actual
Santa Fe, USA	140	Actual
Southern California, USA	250	Actual

Vermont, USA	150	Actual
Washington DC, USA	350	Actual
Maine, USA	25	Actual
New York & New Jersey, USA	13000	Estimated
North Carolina, USA	35	Actual
Quebec, Canada	100	Actual
British Columbia, Canada	450	Actual
Vancouver Island, Canada	100	Actual
Belleville, Canada	64	Actual
Utah, USA	259	Actual
Wisconsin, USA	700	Actual
Places Without a Formal Tibetan Association Population		
Alabama (Mobile and Birmingham), USA	8	Actual
Anchorage, Alaska, USA	11	Actual
Edmonton, Canada	7	Actual
Florida, USA	15	Actual
Hawaii, USA	6	Actual
Louisiana, USA	1	Actual
Nova Scotia, Canada	8	Actual
Tennessee, USA	5	Actual
Total population	**36098**	

Source: (SARD 2020, 44)

The Discursive Art of China's Colonialism: Reconfiguring Tibetan and State Identities

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Abstract

How do present forms of colonialisms persist in what is presumed to be the 'post' colonial era? One-way colonialism persists in the current era is through the state's 'modification' of its identity according to Indigenous studies scholar Glen Coulthard (2014). Scholars of Empire studies have long stressed how the colonial state constructs its own identity in the process of constructing the identities of its colony and subjects (Cooper and Stoler 1997, Stoler 2010). In this article, I consider this question through the framework of Tibet and China and ask, how is China's current relationship to Tibet understood as state and subject, rather than colonizer and colonized? In the following, I suggest this in part has to do with how Tibetans are understood to be 'Chinese' in the present moment. Through a careful examination of China's different and successive government's discursive and rhetorical mechanisms, I explore how Tibetan identity is reinvented and state identity modified to construct Tibet in China's national imagination as part of China.

Keywords: Tibet, China, Colonialism, Discursive Art, Identity

How do present forms of colonialisms persist in what is presumed to be the 'post' colonial era? One-way colonialism persists in the current era is through the state's 'modification' of its identity according to Indigenous studies scholar Glen Coulthard (2014). Scholars of Empire studies have long stressed how the colonial state constructs its own identity in the process of constructing the identities of its colony and subjects (Cooper and Stoler 1997, Stoler 2010). In this article, I consider this question through the framework of Tibet and China and ask, how is China's current relationship to Tibet understood as state and subject,

rather than colonizer and colonized? In the following, I suggest this in part has to do with how Tibetans are understood to be 'Chinese' in the present moment. Through a careful examination of China's different and successive government's discursive and rhetorical mechanisms, I explore how Tibetan identity is reinvented and state identity modified to construct Tibet in China's national imagination as part of China. Such reconfiguration of identities, which centers the history of Tibet's development through Chinese frameworks rather than Tibetan ones, function to counter and erase past and ongoing histories of Tibetan nationalism that continually challenge China's sovereign claims over Tibet. The discursive ramification of such state-produced historical erasures and identity reconfigurations is that it allows modern nation states such as China to operationalize systematic colonialisms in its colonies while distancing itself from its colonial identity. This is how present forms of colonialisms under new modern orders continue to function anew in what is presumed to be the 'post' colonial era.

In the following, I examine discursive moves produced by different Chinese regimes on Tibetans to understand how Tibetans have come to be constructed as 'Chinese' in contemporary China's national imagination and why Tibet and China's relationship is understood as 'not-colonized' in two ways. First, through an exploration of China's National Republic government's (1912–1949) ethnographic construction of Tibetans as "primitive" Chinese from China's past, which were drawn from earlier centuries' observations of Tibetans from the Qing (1644–1911) and western colonial officers and explorers' accounts. And second, through an examination of the People's Republic of China's (1949-) rhetorical devices deployed to modify the state's identity as anti-imperial and anti-capitalist during its earlier era, to a benevolent state invested in the upliftment of its 'backward' subjects of Tibetans in the present. Through a careful exploring of how the state discursively reinvents Tibetan identity as Chinese and rhetorically constructs itself as a liberal state invested in its subjects, I show how the current Chinese state is able to erase its contemporary relation to Tibet as colonial at home and abroad.

Chinese Imagination of Tibetans as Chinese and Tibet as Part of China

In a 2012 New York Times article by Xu Zhiyong, a Han Chinese lawyer and human rights advocate writing on the subject of the Chinese state and self-immolating Tibetans, Zhiyong ends the article with reflections on the self-immolations of Nangdrol and others like Nangdrol with some powerful last words:

> I am sorry we Han Chinese have been silent as Nangdrol and his fellow Tibetans are dying for freedom. We are victims ourselves, living in estrangement, infighting, hatred and destruction. We share this land. It's our shared home, our shared responsibility, our shared dream — and it will be our shared deliverance (Zhiyong 2012).

China's Propaganda painting depicting all the "ethnic minorities."
Image: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe.

Although Zhiyong's closing words seem to acknowledge state-sponsored inequalities and violence against Tibetans with his apology. He frequently uses the word "we" to talk about himself as a Han Chinese and other Tibetans to denote an equal positioning of the both as Chinese. Zhiyong's insistence at using "we" to describe Tibetans and himself as Chinese seems to miss the point that the immolators and other Tibetans,

he had met on his journey in Tibet were trying to convey with their insistence on identifying themselves as 'Tibetan' rather than Chinese when they introduced themselves or talked about the subject of the immolations to him. The way Zhiyong deploys "we" is reminiscent of Derek Gregory's ruminations on the conflict between imagined narratives by the colonizer and the colonized played out in the colonized space-land (2004). Gregory's work, which utilizes Said's orientalism (1978) to look at how the US discursively constructs middle easterners as terrorists, as methods for carrying out violent imperial agendas, discusses how Israelis saw themselves versus Palestinians when it came to the conflict of Israeli occupation of Palestine. While Israelis viewed themselves as fighting for the "right of homeland" as scripted in the Zionist imagination, Palestinians saw themselves as fighting against Israeli "invaders" whom they saw as "settler colonizers" (2004).

Zhiyong deploys the word "we" empathetically when discussing protests by Tibetan self-immolators and human rights advocates like himself against the state to denote Tibetans and Hans as equals. His view of Tibet as a "shared home" between Tibetans and Hans also highlights how Zhiyong sees Tibet to be part of China, and therefore, sees Tibetans as Chinese citizens like himself. In stark contrast, on the 20 June, 2012, Ngawang Norphel and Tenzin Khedup self-immolated and died while shouting for a "freedom" that were in direct conflict with Zhiyongs' usage of the term "shared home" (Wong 2012, Tsering 2012). According to a letter left behind by the two deceased, "they urged all Tibetans to be united in the fight for Tibet's freedom and the return of the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama from exile" (Tsering 2012). Zhiyong comes to interpret the "freedom" that Ngawang Norphel and Tenzin Khedup are calling for to mean freedom in accessing rights allotted to citizens like him yet are denied as subjects of the state. In such an interpretation, Zhiyong fails to understand considerations for a kind of "freedom" that self-immolators such as Ngawang Norphel and Tenzin Khedup call for that could be rejecting of Chinese citizenship in recognition of a Tibetan national one. In other words, Zhiyong fails to understand how such calls for freedom by Tibetans could include freedom from the Chinese state altogether. Such calls are not new when considered through Tibet's recent history of national protests against the

Chinese state. They have been recorded beginning with Khampa rebellion in Gyalthang under the leadership of Wangchuk Tempa (Norbu 2009) and spread across other parts of Kham against the People's Liberation Army soldiers in the 1950s (McGranahan 2010). The Lhasa uprising against Chinese military occupation in 1959, retaliation against Cultural Revolution policies in the late 1980s that went on till the early 1990s (Schwartz 1994), the 2008 uprising across the Tibetan plateau against the Chinese state which gave rise to protest by self-immolation in recent times (Woeser 2016). Such protests by Tibetans, which coincide with the inception and establishment of Chinese military control of Tibet beginning in the 1940s, have been consistent in their call for a freedom from the Chinese state in recognition of a Tibetan one (Lokyitsang 2013). While self-immolators such as Ngawang Norphel and Tenzin Khedup recognize such pasts through their own commemorative act of protest which highlight grievances of Tibetans against the state as ongoing and originating from the initial loss of Tibet's sovereignty. Zhiyong comes to interpret such acts to be in line with his own grievances against the state as a Chinese citizen whose rights are being violated.

Despite Zhiyong's novel attempts at understanding Tibetan protests against the state through the framework of sameness as Chinese citizens fighting for "freedom," he fails to understand the Tibetans he spoke to in Tibet about the self-immolations as calling for a freedom that not only included accessing rights which Tibetans as ethnic minority citizens of China are denied, but also included demands of a freedom from the Chinese state that implicitly calls out the Chinese state's relation to Tibet as foreign and occupation by such protestors. In other words, Zhiyong is incapable of comprehending Tibetan calls for a freedom that could mean complete separation from China and a denial of Chinese identification in preference for a Tibetan national one.

Structurally Designed Misidentifications: The Durability of Imperial Re-orderings

Zhiyong's conflict in understanding Tibetan grievances and protests inside Tibet resonates with what Achille Mbembe called "entanglement" of the modern state in the postcolonial era (2001). Entanglement involves "the coercion to which people are subjected,…a whole cluster

of re-orderings of society, culture, and identity, and a series of recent changes in the way power is exercised and rationalized" (2001, 66). For Jean Dennison, such re-orderings sought to control and define Native communities of North America within the bounds of the settler state by denying them tribal recognition, a path that would legalize tribal sovereignty and allow such communities to have control over their own self-determination (2012). The "durability" of such re-orderings and their persistence in modern state-craft in the post-colonial era from the colonial era according to Ann Stoler (2016) is also what causes the kinds of confusions Zhiyong experienced. Zhiyong's misidentification of Tibetans as Chinese and his misinterpretation of their protests as about rights alone are not deliberate attempts by Zhiyong at misreading Tibetans. How then does Zhiyong come to assume Tibetans as Chinese and Tibet as "our shared home"? In other words, how did Zhiyong along with most of China's population in the present era come to envision Tibet to be part of China?

To begin, Zhiyong's assumptions are not far from China's own state narrative regarding Tibet. As such, I take such assumptions and read them through the framework of the state, and how the state comes to construct such narratives in the first place. In other words, readings of Tibetans as Chinese and Tibet as part of China should be understood as state-crafted narratives that assists the state in its efforts to re-order society, culture, and identity of its subjects. For George Steinmetz, one way the German state achieved such re-ordering of indigenous identities and societies in its colonies was through the "effects of ethnographic discourse" (2007, xix). To disturb Zhiyong's notion of Tibet as "our shared home," I turn to interrogate ethnographic discourses produced by the Chinese state on Tibetans. For historian Tsering Shakya, notions of Tibet as an "integral part of China" are a recent construction by the Communist Party in its efforts in nation building (2002). However, for historian Yudru Tsomu, such constructions were themselves adopted by the current administration from the Nationalist Republic government, which were themselves informed by the Qing administration and western orientalist publications on Tibet (2013). The Qing (1644–1911), the Nationalist Republic of China (1912–1949), and the People's Republic of China (1949-) were successive governments that came to power after

initiating the fall of the other, one after the other, in order to begin a 'new' republic in the modern era. Each governments inherited, adopted and redesigned the earlier administration's discursive ethnographic constructions of Tibetans in order to initiate construction of its own national identity.

"Ethnic minorities" performing in front of the Potala, Lhasa, Tibet.
Image: Xinhua

The Invention of Tibetans as 'primitive' Chinese: Ethnographic Constructions of the Nationalist Republic of China

The discursive formation of Tibetans as Chinese began with the efforts of the Nationalist Republic government after the demise of the Qing administration. In *Taming the Khampas: The Republican Construction of Eastern Tibet*, Tsomu writes about how "[i]ssues of insecurity and unruliness on the Kham frontier forced the government of Republican China to adopt a policy of integration" (2013, 1). The "issue of insecurity and unruliness on the Kham frontier" in eastern Tibet were issues the Nationalist government had inherited from the Qing administration. Before the Nationalist's successive revolt against Qing rule in 1911, the Qing administration had been preoccupied with attempts to control the Kham frontier due to insecurities concerning Western imperialism. The Qing administration became increasingly insecure when western powers penetrated their territories during the first and second Opium Wars (1840-1842 and 1856-1860), and saw its neighboring countries and

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kingdoms become colonies under various European empires (Hevia 2003). According to Dahpon David Ho, it was such threats that prompted the Qing administration's interest in incorporating Tibet and securing what the Qing saw as its "frontiers" (2008, 210-246). This insecurity became legitimized in Tibet for the Qing in two key moments according to Yudru Tsomu: the rise of Nyarong Gonpo Namgyal in Kham in the 19th century and the British invasion of Lhasa at the beginning of the 20th century (2013). These two events challenged Qing authority in Tibet, heightened their insecurities concerning western imperial infiltration, and was the basis for their desire to incorporate Tibet under their rule.

Nyarong Gonpo Namgyal had been a chieftain and a native of Nyarong, Kham during the 19th century (Tsomu 2014). At the time, Nyarong had been a major commercial and transportation hub between China and larger Tibet (Tsomu 2014). In order for the Qing to take "effective control over Lhasa," they needed to first secure its dominance over the border province of Kham (Tsomu 2013, 4). Nyarong Gonpo Namgyal's rise to power in the region, which saw the conquest of Nyarong by 1848 and culminated with majority of Kham captured by 1863, challenged Qing and Lhasa administrative rule and trade possibilities in the province (Tsomu 2014, 185). However, by mid-1865, the Tibetan government's army was able to defeat Gonpo Namgyal with assistance from local chieftains (2014, 209) and extended Lhasa's administrative control over the province (221). Gonpo Namgyal's rise in Kham served as a reminder for the Qing of the fragility of its control in the border province. This fragility was furthered when the British invaded Lhasa in 1904 (Harris 2012). The increased threat to Qing rule in Tibet first by the chieftain Gonpo Namgyal, followed by the British invasion in 1904 prompted the Qing to launch a military invasion of Lhasa and introduced reforms aimed to establish Qing rule in Tibet in 1910 (Goldstein and Beall 1991, D. Norbu 1998). Such efforts were interrupted however, by the outbreak of Nationalist revolution against the Qing in 1911. The 13th Dalai Lama called on Khampas to unite and "defend Buddhism" against the Qing in 1912 (Shakabpa 1976, 195-96), and by 1913 used the momentum against the Qing to proclaim Tibet's independence to deter further encroachments on Tibet's sovereignty by foreign forces (Tenpa 2012).

Following Qing's defeat, the Nationalist Republic took up where the Qing had left off with Kham. Like their predecessor, the Nationalist administration also considered Kham as an important geopolitical and strategic location for accessing larger Tibet, and took serious interest in western imperial intrusions of the region. Following the 13th Dalai Lama's proclamation and reassertion of Lhasa's administrative control

"Western-Imperialism" against China propaganda art.
Image: H. Meyer

over Kham, the Nationalist government felt such proclamations and reassertion of power needed to be countered and matched (Tsomu 2013, 5). As a result, "[t]he integration of Kham became an integral part of the Chinese nationalists' national imagination" (Tsomu 2013, 5). Although the Nationalist government had inherited Qing concerns for the need to incorporate Tibet through Kham as avenues for deterring western imperial forces, their strategies for how this incorporation should take shape differed discursively. While the Qing administration considered Tibet under its imperial sphere of influence, they never considered Tibetans to be of Qing stock. Instead, Tibetans and other ethnic communities in Qing accounts were framed as an 'other' in contrast to themselves (Mullaney 2010). Denoting difference rather than sameness between the Qing and Tibetans, for the Nationalist government however, the incorporation of Tibetans required a strategy of sameness rather than difference. For Tsomu, this strategy involved the need for Kham "to be incorporated in China's national imagination and understood as a

core territory of the new China" (2013, 5). The Nationalists were able to do this through a discursive strategy on Kham that projected an image of a "commonality of co-nationals that was stressed through common ancestry and historical linkage" (5). Alongside military attempts to take geopolitical control of Kham, the Nationalists also deployed a textual strategy to reconstruct the people and customs of Kham as "ancient Chinese" in order to reinvent their identity as Chinese co-nationals (6).

At the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century, scholarly developments on the frontier regions by other imperial powers such as Japan, Russia, and other Western countries prompted the Chinese to also invest in scholarly study of these regions (Durara 2004, 188-92). "[S]cholarly knowledge about Tibet produced by European and Indian scholars in the same period surpassed the sum total of works produced in the first two centuries of Qing influence in Tibet" (Tuttle 2005, 29–30, Tsomu 2013, 6). "As a result, from the late Qing and particularly during the [Nationalist] Republican period, there was a rush to study and produce research works on Tibet" (Tsomu 2013, 6). While western scholarship on Tibetans were considered evidence of western penetration, Nationalist intellectuals also began drawing on and translating such works into Chinese as avenues for integrating the frontier in the new China's national imagination (Wang Yao et al. 2003: 230, 148). In addition to the Chinese language reproduction of western scholarship on Tibet, they also published works by Chinese official cum scholars who had performed administrative or military duties under the Nationalist government in Kham. The Nationalists also employed their own intellectuals to produce scholarship on the frontier peoples who later advised the government on how to rule such regions. One such figure was Ren Naiqiang, he is considered "the founding father of Kham studies in China," writes Tsomu (2013, 10). "For the duration of one year, he travelled throughout nine counties in Kham. During his investigation trip, he married Lodrö Chöntso, the niece of Dorje Namgyel, the indigenous leader of Upper Nyarong. On returning to Chengdu, he wrote a series of articles based on what he had seen and heard" (Tsomu 2013, 10). Following successive books on Kham, he became a professor and advised the Nationalist government on how to govern Kham towards a favourable outcomes for the Chinese state.

Ren also surveyed and came up with his own standard map of Kham. His map later served as blueprints for the People's Liberation Army soldiers who invaded and consolidated power in Kham on behalf of the People's Republic of China in the 1950s (Ren 2009, 2, Wei 1989, 8).

In Ren Naiqiang's descriptive work, he tended to place Tibetan culture and tradition as part of China's past. "Throughout Ren's work, there are constant references to Tibetan practices as ancient Chinese traditions," writes Tsomu (2013, 15). Doing so allowed Ren to highlight "a narrative of similarity" rather than difference (15). Yet claims of such practices as remnants of China's past lacked actual historical evidence and was motivated instead by the need to trace the roots of such customs to China, according to Tsomu (2013, 16). While this narrative method stressed similarity, the implication that such customs were themselves practices of China's past emphasized how such customs were seen through an evolutionary lens. "The method here to explain the cultural traditions of Kham is to position the local culture as both primitive and a remnant of ancient China. There is no attempt to understand the traditions in themselves. The history of the local traditions is always framed in relation to China. Han culture is the natural condition and the people of Kham are viewed as remnants of the Han past" (Tsomu 2013, 16).

By divorcing Kham from their own developmental history as a people and geography, and placing them within China's national past as Chinese primitives through evolutionary frameworks, Nationalist intellectuals such as Ren were able to successfully construct Kham, and thus larger Tibet, within China's national imagination as 'Chinese'. The construction of Tibetans as Chinese primitives through such discursive means allowed the Nationalist government to naturalize its identity in Kham as co-nationals. Doing so allowed the Nationalists to justify sovereign claims over Tibet. While the identification of Tibetans as co-nationals stressed a relation of equals, the evolutionary categorization of Tibetans as "primitives" from China's "ancient past" denoted Tibetans as lagging behind their Han counterpart. Such framings of Tibetans as primitives lagging behind also worked to advance Nationalist assimilation projects targeted at Tibetan people. In short, the discursive strategy

of constructing Tibetans to be Chinese primitives of China's past helped to advance the Nationalist claims of Tibet as part of China, and supported their aim of constructing Tibetans in China's national imagination as Chinese. This discursive strategy proved useful for the Nationalist government, and was reproduced later by the successive People's Republic of China (PRC) following their victory over the Nationalist government in 1949.

The Rhetorical Devices of the Communist State: Constructing State-Identity in the Era of Decolonization and Liberal Modern Nation-States

If we are in the 'post' colonial era as suggested by postcolonial studies, does that mean colonialism is over? This question was posed to me by a friend in 2012 when I told him I was working on the topic of colonialism in the present. "But I thought colonialism was over." I asked him to elaborate on what he meant. He pointed to how former European colonies were no longer under colonization. I point to this example because colonization is often assumed to be specific to Europe, and thus, over (Pels 1997, Stoler and McGranahan 2007). This is also an assumption that is normalized in popular discourse on Tibet by the Left which presumes governance under communist claiming regimes are free of imperial and colonial underpinnings (Parenti 2003, Sautman 2003, Chomsky 2012). The problem with such reductive readings is not only its denial of continuing cases of colonialisms such as Palestine, Hawaii, and Tibet in what is presumed to be the 'post' colonial era, it also fails to acknowledge long Asian imperial histories including those of China, Japan, and India. This is problematic because such presumptions center the history of the world, even about empires on Europe in linear and singular terms. Such presumptions also become the basis for how the PRC constructs Tibet's relation to China as that of state and subject and erase its relation to Tibet as colonial through the deployment of state-constructed rhetorical devices.

In 1949, following the defeat of the Nationalist Republic government by the Communist Party of China, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) began advancing into Kham under the claim that they were there to 'liberate' Tibetans from 'western imperialism'. World War II had just

come to an end, and former colonies under different European empires were experiencing decolonization following successive nationalist independence movements (McGranahan 2007, 180). As a result, "[d]isavowal of imperial status" was becoming "de rigueur" at the time, writes McGranahan (2007, 176). Although the imperial status was going out of style, it did not mean empires ceased to exist. Instead, they simply changed their tune by condemning old forms of domination associated with European colonialism, while functioning anew under "national languages of defence, development, and global responsibility" writes McGranahan (2007, 176). For instance, the US used the discourse of 'freeing' countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Philippines through the rhetoric of 'democratization' in its Cold War rivalry efforts while claiming to champion anti-colonial efforts. "If [the era of] Decolonization discouraged colonialism as a specific form of imperialism, it ironically opened the world to other forms of similar domination," writes McGranahan (2007, 175). Taking full advantage of the "moment of decolonization" (186), the PLA launched a full military takeover of Tibet that began in Kham in 1949 and ended in 1959 with the taking of Lhasa while justifying such military overtaking through the rhetorics of 'liberation from western imperialism' domestically and internationally. The PRC's promotion of itself as 'anti-capitalist' and 'anti-imperial' during the era of decolonization to the international community also became useful rhetorical devices for deterring other nations from intervening on Tibet's behalf despite lobbying efforts by Tibetan government officials at the United Nations (Shakya 1999, 52, 59, 221).

In recent international discourse, the PRC has moved on from the rhetorics of itself as anti-imperial and anti-capitalist to one about being victims of western interests in keeping a rising China down (Sautman 2012). Such was the case when the 2008 protests by Tibetans broke out across Tibet. When western media covered the events of the uprising by Tibetans against the state, Chinese state media responded with accusations of western meddling in the internal politics of China. Making the claim that western coverage of Tibetan protests was motivated by western imperial interests in wanting to curb China's socio-economic rise in the global arena (Hillman 2009). Mass protests by Chinese citizens in China

"Lady Liberty" bringing Democratic freedom. U.S. propaganda poster during Cold War. Image: Unknown

and abroad broke out against western media as a result. CNN was among western media companies targeted by such protests. While there is no denying that there could indeed be imperial interests that shaped past and current interactions between the US and China, such rhetorical device deployed by the Chinese state also do the job of shifting the attention of the protests of 2008 away from Tibetan protestors on the city streets of Tibet, and reorients the topic regarding the protests on a narrative about western domination over China again. In other words, the state's deployment of such rhetorical methods forces any possible conversations concerning Tibet from Tibetans themselves to shut down. Which is the intended purpose of such state-produced rhetorics.

As previously highlighted, the PRC inherited its ethnographic construction of Tibetans as primitive Chinese, which does the job of construction of Tibetans as 'Chinese' subjects who need saving from western imperialism from its Nationalist and Qing predecessors. The narrative has evolved in the current moment to construct the PRC as occupying a relationship with Tibetans as that of benevolent state invested in the upliftment of its materially and culturally backwards Tibetan subjects. This narrative has been proliferated by the state through multiple discursive methods since the PRC's administrative control was established in Tibet from the 1950s onward, and include state-sponsored mediums such as movies, music, literature, art, plays, and so on at home and abroad (Shakya 2008, Norbu 2010, Zeitchik and Landreth 2012). More recently, this narrative has been deployed

2008 Anti-CNN protest by Chinese Nationalists in the US.
Image: China Digital Times

to explain and justify intensification of infrastructure development in Tibet following China's "Go West" modernization campaign (Singh 2002). In *Taming Tibet*, Emily Yeh looks at how the state narrates such projects across Tibet as "gifts" bestowed by the state and its Han settlers to their Tibetan "little brothers" (2015). Despite the state's attempt to portray itself as a benevolent state invested in its supposed backward subject of Tibetans, scholars agree that Tibetans have responded to such mechanics through a show of collective dissent as nationalist rebellions against a state they see as foreign beginning with Khampa rebellions against advancing PLA soldiers in the 1950s (McGranahan 2010) and more recently through the 2008 uprising and self-immolation protests that followed (Lokyitsang 2013, Makley 2015). Such Tibetan nationalist and anti-colonial-occupation rebellion against the Chinese state also highlight how the state's 'gift' of development have benefited few and disenfranchised many in Tibet from having control over their own destinies and land (Fischer 2005, 2013).

While the rhetorical devices and discursive methods I have mentioned are not based on, and have no bearing on how Tibetans actually identify or see their history, by focusing my discussion on how the state constructs and deploys such discursive technologies, I highlight how such

Film poster for "Serf". Produced by August First Studio in 1963. From Woeser's article in High Peaks Pure Earth (2011).

discourses are not actually about Tibetans or their histories. Instead, I have shown how such discursive methods become deployed by the state to construct its own identity: as liberators of western imperial infiltration during the Nationalist era, as an anti-imperial and anti-capitalist state of the Communist era, and as a benevolent state invested in the upliftment of its backward Tibetan subject in the present. This rhetorical and discursive device, constructed by and build upon by different Chinese governments has served each state in its own efforts in constructing its own identities in the frontiers, at home, and abroad. It is also how the current state in Beijing is able to erase its relation to the frontiers such as Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang as colonial.

Conclusion

In concluding, I have explored how contemporary China comes to view Tibetans as Chinese and Tibet as part of China through the deployment of discursive technologies and rhetorical strategies by different and successive Chinese administrations of the Qing, the Nationalist Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China. I have highlighted how the Nationalist drew on Qing insecurities concerning western imperialism and western produced ethnographic sources to refashion a new kind of ethnographic narrative that constructs Tibetans in China's national imagination as Primitive-Chinese from China's civilizational past in order to make sovereign claims over Tibet. I have shown how such racialized renderings of Tibetans as 'primitive' Chinese were later incorporated and reproduced by the Chinese Communist Party to propagate notions of Tibetans as Chinese and how this narrative serves to justify the state's military and infrastructure development activities in Tibet. These state-

produced narratives are not based on how Tibetans themselves identify and barely engage the development of Tibetans as a people and their land through Tibetan civilizational accounts by Tibetans themselves. Instead, these state-accounts of Tibetan people and history are designed by the state to construct the state's own identity as a benevolent state concerned with its backward subjects against the backdrop of western imperial domination for its domestic and international audiences. This new identity of the benevolent Chinese state also works to erase the state's original identity in Tibet as foreign and its relation to Tibet as that of occupation and colonization. Such discursive and rhetorical method which frames the issue of Tibet as domestic internal matters of China, also operates to shut down all discussions concerning Tibet that diverge from the state's official accounts. This is how liberal Chinese advocates such as Zhiyong, who insist on citizen-led political mobilizations in China to challenge the state to democratize, continually fail to see state-sponsored securitization campaigns that terrorize Tibetans through colonial frameworks. By pinpointing how such discursive methods are constructed, I have shown how colonial governmentalities in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia (under the current administrative control of the central state in Beijing) are allowed to continue operating under the banner of a modern nation-state in what we assume to be the 'post' colonial era. Such reconfiguration of state identity-making is how modern forms of colonialisms are allowed to function anew as liberal modern states in the present moment. While scholars of empire studies, postcolonial studies, and settler colonial studies have stressed how the state continually seeks to redefine itself through its subjects, developing scholarship in Tibetan studies and China studies has only recently considered such approaches for analyzing the development of the current state in Beijing. I hope this work contributes to this development and encourages more rigorous approaches for analyzing Tibet's relation to China that does not shy away from engaging imperial, settler colonial, and securitization analytics that takes the state's own identity-making approaches into account.

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Centering Tibetan Female Buddhist Practitioners in China's Women Empowerment Discourse in Tibet[1]

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Abstract

The narrative of China's women empowerment discourse in Tibet is mostly associated with communist China's "civilising" trope. Tibetan women's perceived "disempowerment" within their community is one of the reasons used to promote Tibet's backwardness and China's rule in Tibet since the 1950s. Since the 2000s, China's development campaign in Tibet has consolidated the colonial discourse of women's *"empowerment"* where the question of women's religious agency is ignored, sidelined, and marginalized. This paper counters the China's discourse of Tibetan women's empowerment by exclusively discussing the ways in which the women empowerment discourse in Tibet has been attached to the colonial vehicle of progress. It investigates how China's women empowerment discourse evades the larger question of Tibetan women's religious agency by particularly discussing the state's religious policies implemented on Serthar Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in recent years. By discussing and making sense of Tibetan nuns' empowerment and agency in Tibet today, this paper examines how religious policy and state intervention in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar creates disempowerment for Tibetan nuns while simultaneously creating a disjointed and colonial narrative on Tibetan women's status in Tibet.

Keywords: Tibet, China, Tibetan Buddhism, Nuns, Agency, Development.

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1. The shorter version of this article has been published in The Quint, https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/tibetan-buddhist-nuns-women-suppression-re-education-camps-sinicisation-chinese-state-xi-jinping

China's Colonial Discourse on Women's Empowerment in Tibet

China's media spaces have largely accommodated the discourse of development to contrast Tibet before and after the Chinese Communist Party's invasion of Tibet. Of such media practices, the discourse of development *vis-a-vis* Tibetan women's empowerment in Tibet is highly entertained across China's media outlets. It is accomplished through concentration on the accounts of Tibetan women's economic achievements:

> Impacted by the traditional views and production and living style of Tibetan ethnic group, Tibetan women rarely had a chance for education and work in the past (Xinhua 2019).

> The hardworking woman became a senior manager step by step from a waitress, after five years (Xinhua 2019).

The news pieces extracted above illustrate some of the ways by which Chinese state development discourse articulates Tibetan women's "increasing sense of self-worth". Development discourse is pervasive across media spaces where Tibetan women's empowerment is being *"realised"* with the help of the state, in that the whole of Tibetan women's agency is condensed under the rubric of state's development project. The state's recent online practices have also inculcated the practice of displaying images of Tibetan women before and after China's invasion in a contrasting fashion. The black and white image points to the squalid situation Tibetan women were under the then-Tibetan government before 1959, while the colourful image depicts the "developed" state of Tibetan women and children under the Chinese Communist Party's rule.

In an essay, *Regime of Temporality,* Seagh Kehoe discusses the state's manipulation of media spaces to depict "Tibet" as static, inflexible, and devoid of any progression through the fusion of black and white and colourful images. In the creation of "Old Tibet" as "backward", Chinese state tries to reinforce the idea of a 'clear temporal distinction between 'old Tibet' and 'New Tibet,' positioning them as 'radically opposed epochs' (Kehoe 2020, 1141). As Seagh Kehoe argued that the

state's dichotomous creation of "Old Tibet" and "New Tibet" is not new -- such rhetoric has been disseminated through articles, posters, videos, and recently through online portals in Tibet since the 1950s (Kehoe 2020).

(Source: Xinhua, 27/3 /2019)

Similarly, the political use of gender discourse in Tibet and "women's liberation" occurred alongside the state's propagandistic work in Tibet. With the upsurge in the use of media spaces in recent decades, the use of gender discourse has found consolidated space in Chinese state-owned media spaces. This discourse of development accompanies the colonial narrative of progress and development. Tibetan women and their agency have been perennially blurred within representations that are defined by the state. What comes out of such discourse is a heavily restrictive representation of Tibetan women, who are reduced to passive and mute entities, a symbol that can be monopolised by the state to pander to its ideas of the "Chinese socialist dreams."

Since the expansionist policy of China in Tibet, the discourse of development and modernisation has been much of China's defining propaganda in Tibet. Before and increasingly since the Cultural Revolution, China's grip on Tibet has been primarily driven and maintained by the rhetoric of development. How now this rhetoric of development has infiltrated the production of gender discourse in Tibet? While there is state representation of Tibetan women that portrays

(Source: Xinhua, 27/3/2019)

them as 'empowered' and/or 'uplifted' from the drudgery of the "old feudal society", Tibetan female Buddhist practitioners, particularly nuns, have come under state scrutiny with the state's increasing meddling in Tibetan monastic spaces. This paper highlights the case of the growing state-intrusion into Tibetan monastic spaces in recent years, in particular the intrusions faced by nuns in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar who have experienced unique disempowerment as a consequence of the Chinese state's actions. Through this examination, I hope to bring into focus how the Chinese state's development discourse *vis-a-vis* women's empowerment renders stale and propagandistic against the larger question of Tibetan women's cultural and religious agency, and the state's increasing intrusion into their sacred spaces that decapacitates their sense of agency.

Tibetan Women: Gender Discourse in Mao and Deng Era

The narrative of gender discourse in China has hugely transitioned and fluctuated since the inception of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Li 2000). Initially, the gender discourse from Mao to Deng Xiaoping's era has largely echoed the nationalist sentiments of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party), albeit in different modes of execution (A. S. Leung 2003, 363-69).

China's gender discourse in Tibet was spearheaded by the PRC's "liberation" campaign to "liberate" Tibetan women from "feudal society". Charlene Makley notes that early Chinese writers categorized Tibetan women as "slaves of the society" (Makley 1997, 8) The categorization stemmed from the "unequal" gendered labour that was present in the Tibetan domestic spheres. In the "liberation campaign" for Tibetan women, a "balanced" participation of gendered labour was seen as a means to the 'upliftment' of Tibetan women (Makley 1997, 8-9). The state then imposed the regulation and abolition of the monastic system and dissolution of Tibetan family structure replacing it with a Han model of family structure (Makley 1997, 8). She offers various points to consider Tibetan women's relations to disempowerment and empowerment, especially within local Tibetan context (Makley 1997, 12-21). The state's mobilisation of Tibetan women as farm workers in the 1950s and their transformation into "Chinese socialist subjects" is evident through the promise of their "liberation" from "gender asymmetric" Tibetan community (Yeh 2013, 84).

A glance at China's shift towards a free market economy in the late 1970s will demonstrate how economic development became CCP's hallmark to accelerate and expand its control over Tibet. During this era, there were major shifts in how Tibet was further integrated into the PRC's policy (Topgyal 2018). Although Tibetans were given relatively freer movements in terms of cultural expression and economic upliftment, this came at the cost of a heavy influx of non-Tibetan people into Tibet as part of the state's development project (Topgyal 2018). The full integration of Tibetans into the state's policies was carried out, as Tsering Topgyal has stated, "with the security and nation-building rationale of packing in as many nationalities" (Topgyal 2018, 303). China's policy agenda in Tibet has since then permeated the fabric of Tibet and its culture where now Tibet is being operated upon the logics of dominant state discourse. Post-1979, during Deng's liberalisation era, there was an attempted disentanglement of the perception and discourse of gender after Mao's complete negation of gender difference in the Cultural Revolution (Leung 2003). On the one hand, this policy rendered women to participate in an increasingly market-oriented economy and on the other hand, it expected women to conform to stricter gender roles

where women were encouraged to be "socialist housewives" (Leung 2003, 368). How might then we locate Tibetan nuns amid the state's rendition of gender discourse? What do the state's religious policies in Tibet mean for Tibetan nuns?

 Recent Literature on Larung Gar and Yachen Gar: A discussion
There are a few literatures available that are written on Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in English. All of the literature that I have referred to in my research paper have had their research conducted by carrying out field work in Tibet. Among those literature, the literature on Yachen Gar is relatively less as compared to Larung Gar. However, this paper intends to bring light to both institutions by focusing on the state's activities in these monastic spaces and the consequences, especially, suffered by Tibetan nuns. One of the foremost works on Larung Gar appeared in the article, *Re-membering the Dismembered Bodies: Contemporary Tibetan visionary movements in the People's Republic of China* by David Germano. The article explores the inception of Larung Gar and how it transitioned into one of the most important Buddhist learning institutes in the world. Holly Gayley's article is an analysis of the "Ten Buddhist Ethics" promulgated by Khenpo Sordagye from Larung Gar. Tsering Say's article shifts the focus on the establishment of Khenmo program in Larung Gar, Yachen Gar and other nunnery called Bha Lhagong nearby these two institutions. Daan F. Oostveen's article, *Rhizomatic Religion and Material Destruction in Kham Tibet: The Case of Yachen Gar*, makes the argument that religion practiced by the nuns of Yachen Gar is a Rhizomatic Religion, which is according to Oostveen is a native form of religion that is specific to cultural sensibilities of the Tibetan nuns. Yasmin Cho's ethnographic research on Yachen Gar nuns called, *Yachen Gar as Process: Encampments, Nuns, and Spatial Politics in Post-Mao Tibet* is a study on Yachen Gar in a state of flux. Jue Liang and Andrew Taylor's article traces the inception, curriculum, and the impact of the Khenmo Programme on the larger Tibetan community in Tibet and the everyday lives of the nuns themselves. Similarly, Padma'tsho and Sarah Jacoby's article, *Gender Equality in and on Tibetan Buddhist Nuns' Terms* focuses on the conceptualisation and meanings of gender equality amongst Larung Gar nuns in Tibet today. The article also focuses on the nuns' recent writings on female Buddhist practitioners, and what such projects mean

to them. However, the above papers do not specifically focus on the impact of state's intrusion on Tibetan monks and nuns. This paper, apart from showing the repercussions of mass expulsion and demolition of living quarters, makes the argument that China's women empowerment in Tibet today further marginalises the religious dimension of Tibetan nuns' identity and the exertion of agency.

Development and Tibetan Women

Development as a discourse in African countries after their independence is yet another example of the intrusion of the imperial power as a means of retaining their power and influence. For Shivji, the rapid growth of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) across African countries is a 'neoliberal offensive' that diminishes African states (headed by African people) and people to, as Shivji argues:

> The subject matter of poverty reduction strategy papers, authored by consultants and discussed at stakeholder workshops in which the poor are represented by NGOs. The 'poor' are represented by NGOs. The 'poor'-- the diseased, the disabled, the Aids-infected, the ignorant, the marginalised in short the 'people' -are not part of the development equation, since development is assigned to the private capital that constitutes the 'engine of growth (Shivji 2007, 24).

Shivji warns against the tendency to be submerged within neoliberal discourse, that is in another words, "a reproduction of the colonial mode." Coming back to the colonial context of Tibet, the introduction of economic development in Tibet in the liberalisation era made clear a two-fold objective of the CCP. Affirming the legitimacy of China's rule over Tibet via the assertion of the economic and socio-cultural backwardness of Tibetans and Tibetan society. By CCP's logic, there is apparent collusion of Tibetan Buddhism that hinders economic revitalisation in Tibet (Topgyal 2018). Therefore, with the securitization of Tibetan Buddhism and the start of economic reforms in Tibet, Tibetans would then eventually be "modernised"(Topgyal 2018, 303).

As the market-oriented economy gained further traction in Tibet in the 1990s, the discourse of development began penetrating the

realm of gender. Gender equality became synonymous with economic development, and Tibetan women's empowerment was to be measured within metrics of achievements set by the state. On the same spectrum of Chinese state assumptions about Tibetan women's worldviews and voices, the religious dimension of Tibetan women's identity, particularly those of Tibetan Buddhist nuns have come under increasing restriction with state's religious policies, which this paper will now explore.

Religious Policies: Larung Gar and Yachen Gar

Larung Gar and Yachen Gar are two of today's largest Buddhist Academies in the Tibetan region of contemporary Kham in Tibet. During the initial phase of the establishment, these institutions had not faced restrictions from the state. This could be owing to the Deng Xiaoping's "liberalisation" policy that granted a relative degree of "relaxation" for religious believers, and also its apolitical characteristics of these institutions. Larung Gar is situated in Serthar Kardze and was established in 1980 by Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, a visionary Terton. While Yachen Gar is located in Payul county in Eastern Tibet (Ch: Sichuan Province) and was established in 1985 by Achuk Rinpoche. The establishment of Yachen Gar and Larung Gar coincided with a relatively relaxed policy adopted by Deng Xiaoping after massive destruction of Tibetan monasteries since China's invasion of Tibet and during the Cultural Revolution. Larung Gar community was founded "in an informal, and typically Tibetan, manner: a charismatic lama simply built a small personal home and an initial small circle of close disciples took up residence nearby"(Germano 1998, 62).

However, there were still instances of state officials intruding upon Tibetan religious practices in Central Tibet as evident from 1987 demonstrations staged by nuns and monks hailing from monasteries and nunneries in Lhasa (Schwartz 1995, 59). But this could due to the asymmetric state presence in Central Tibet and other provinces of China as administered under China's colonial rule in Tibet. However, the first phase of interference from the authorities was felt in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in 2001 under Jiang Zemin's leadership. In June 2001, the officials from the United Font Work Department unit had come to oversee the population of nuns and monks at Larung Gar to

be reduced to 1,000 monks and 400 nuns (Tibet Information Network 2002, 50-51). Tibetan nuns were especially targeted and expelled owing to the huge number of their population in Serthar Larung Gar. Similarly, towards the end of 2001, the Yachen Buddhist institute was met with the similar fate of demolition and expulsion of the Tibetan Buddhist practitioners. On 1 September, 2001, a wall poster by the Payul County's People's Government was put up indicating the expulsion and demolition of nuns and monks' living quarters of Yachen Gar (Tibet Information Network 2002, 58). Over 800 monks and nuns of Yachen Gar were expelled and their living quarters demolished. In July 2016, another wave of demolition and expulsion of Tibetan nuns and monks took place. An announcement entitled "Correction and Rectification Obligations for the Larung Gar monastery Buddhist Institute in Serta county" was issued after the 6th Central Government Tibetan areas and National Religious Affairs meeting (Human Rights Watch 2016). This was followed by a similar episode of demolition and expulsion of nuns and monks as reported in July 2017. A similar expulsion of Tibetan monastic and lay practitioners at Yachen Gar was also carried out and reported by a exiled-based rights group(TCHRD 2018).

Conceptualising Tibetan Nuns' Agency

Before discussing the state intervention in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, and the ramification it has had on institutions and its religious subjects, particularly to those of Tibetan nuns, it is imperative to understand the concept of agency as defined by Tibetan nuns themselves. What kind of agency is being expressed by these nuns? More importantly, how their definition of agency and empowerment contradicts the state's colonial discourse of women's empowerment in Tibet and top-down structural policy on Tibetan Buddhism in general, its intervention in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in particular.

Tibetan nuns occupy a very complex space in Tibetan culture. Tibetan nuns were not necessarily regarded as influential religious figures but there are biographical writings of Tibetan women who have achieved the highest order of religious attainment (Havnevik 1989, 64-84). There are few opportunities available for nuns' curriculum that encouraged the advancement of women in learning religious texts and philosophy

until under the leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama in exile, there is a vast shift in this regard by initiating conferment of Geshema Degrees in 2016 (Bureau Reporter 2016). Yet the socio-cultural assumptions regarding women are deeply patriarchal and women are regarded as "fickle."(Havnevik 1989, 148-150.) In the religious sphere as well the motivation of women was regarded with "suspicions."(Havnevik 1989, 157-158) However, Tibetan women have been deeply immersed in religion for many centuries.

Saba Mahmood, drawing on theories developed by Foucault and Judith Butler, dwells deeper into the concept of women's agency, particularly those of religious subjects. She analyses how women's agency is not only to be located within the "binary model of resistance" and "subordination" but also can be located within the 'elements of subordination' (Mahmood 2005, 15). In other words, there are "other modalities of agency" that are operative within spaces where women are otherwise deemed "oppressed or subordinate" (Mahmood 2005, 155). By illustrating the example of pious Muslim women's activities in religious revival in mosques in Egypt in the late 1990s; where they incorporate precepts from Quran, such as female modesty, wearing Hijab and cultivation of "moral and ethical values" based on Islamic principles, into their everyday practices. Saba Mahmood notes that women's engagement with the Quranic texts and norms and using those principles into their everyday practices is where the agency can be located. The agency then should be conceptualised, Mahmood argues: "not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* create and enable" (Mahmood 2005, 18).

Orit Avishai's essay, *Doing Religion*, a framework poses a similar proposition of women's agency to that of Mahmood's analyses of Muslim women's agency in Egypt, although slightly differing in one aspect. Here Avishai examines the Orthodox Jewish women living in Israel, these women's observance of the norms of *niddha*, instructions for sexual purity, is important to their sense of agency. Avishai argues, "religion may be done to achieve religious goals −in this case, the goal of becoming an authentic religious subject against the image of a secular Other" (Avishai 2008, 413). Thanks to incessant questions and inquiries posed by post-colonial

feminist scholars over the decades, they have given us many new and different insights into how women in "third world" countries should be viewed and analysed (Abu-Lughbod 2013, Mohanty 1984). Women who could otherwise be vulnerable to skewed and stereotypical interpretations in the west. It is especially important to understand and study the voices of Tibetan women, in this case Tibetan nuns, who are presently under colonial rule of the Chinese state. Their conceptualisation of agency and empowerment/disempowerment can be an important channel to understand and assess the levels of disempowerment enabled by the Chinese state's policies in Tibet today.

Keeping in mind the critiques put forward by the postcolonial feminist scholars, Padma'tsho and Sarah Jacoby's research foregrounds the voices of Larung Gar nuns. By interviewing and analysing texts written by Larung Gar nuns, they conclude that the terms that drive these nuns to think about "gender equality" are not derivative from the western or Chinese liberal feminist framework, but rather these terms are offshoots of their Buddhist values (Padma' tsho 2020). Although the category of "woman" has been foregrounded in their works recently, they do it so in a manner "which align respect for women with honouring the Buddhist teachings and Tibetan heritage" (Padma' tsho 2020, 16). Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar involve themselves within the Buddhist monastic structure, and define the ways of conceiving "women empowerment" without necessarily resisting the Buddhist values or monastic structure but rather attaching those values at the core how they define the terms of "gender equality" in Tibet today. Their idea about gender and/or gender equality is most often directly linked to their religious ideas about equality, and even gender[2] (Taylor 2020, 255). "Compliant Agency" as defined by Burke, becomes an important lens to assess the position of women in "gender-traditional" religion (Burke 2012). It is particularly pertinent in the case of Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar whose expression of agency (Taylor 2020, Padma' tsho 2020) stands in stark contrast to the Chinese

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2. In an online platform called zoom, a presentation on the title "The History and Future of the first Khenmo Degree" was held by the University of Colorado on October 28, 2020. Here one of the authors, Jue Liang talked that how Larung Gar nuns "foregrounded" their Buddhist identity instead of their gender identity. https://www.colorado.edu/cas/history-and-future-tibets-first-khenmos-20201027

state's mandatory decree of prioritising "national stability" over religious values and studies (Global Times 2012).

Thus, it can be seen that Tibetan nuns in Tibet today, particularly those at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, find considerable sense of empowerment through studying at the institutions. And especially with the Khenmo program, many nuns have become khenmos, on top of having attained higher scholastic education, society's perceptions towards them are changing significantly (Taylor 2020, 259).

In the context of Tibetan enactment of norms in the religious spaces *vis-a-vis* state's growing aggression towards Tibetan Buddhism, (maintenance of) Tibetan gendered practices can produce important channel of expression against the backdrop of a state's complete negation of "ethnic" and "gender difference" in Tibet (Makley 1994). In Charlene Makley's analysis of Labrang monastery, she points out how Tibetans' observance of traditional norms and religious rituals through gendered practices save the sanctity of monastic space in contrast to Chinese and western tourists' negligence of Tibetan sacred spaces in the monastery (Makley 1994, 82-83). Such preservation of monastic space through "traditional gendered practices" is "subversive", in that it helps in reconstructing the Tibetan identity amidst growing effort of the state to subvert Tibetan Buddhism. The gender roles after the Cultural Revolution demanded both men and women to attach their allegiance to the Chinese state (Makley 1994, 81). However, it is seen that the role of spirituality has been neglected where the use of "traditional gendered practices" remains important conduit to make sense of Tibetans' sense of identity (Makley 1994, 83, 81).

State's Religious Policies: A discussion

On 14 July 2019, Buddhist Association of China (BAC) gathered to discuss the themes of "maintaining the direction of Sinicizing Buddhism and development of Buddhist system" on its third meeting of the 9th Standing Committee in Beijing (TCHRD 2019). The meeting held with a firmer commitment that BAC and the Buddhist community across the People's Republic of China (PRC) would carry out the outline work of "Five Year Work Plan for the sinicization of Buddhism"

i.e., from 2019-2023 (TCHRD 2019). The introduction of the "Four Standards" across Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in Central Tibet (Ch: Tibetan Autonomous Region) and the promotion of which was carried out with full rigour. Along with this, the policy of 'Four Standards' was also introduced which stresses on the importance of Chinese nationalism towards the state amongst Tibetan monastics and it was laid as the foundation for complete national cohesion and 'stability'. The 'Sinicization policy -- particularly "sinicization" of the religion was not incorporated earlier but with Xi Jinping's tenure from 2012, "the sinicization of religions" was slowly entrenched into one of the CCP's main policies in Tibet. The policy allowed for a massive intervention of the Party and government officials in the 'management' of religious institutions. Furthermore, the policy allowed for a reworking of Buddhist canonical text so that it would align with the "core socialist values." The state has initiated the policy of banning on the monastic program that trains Tibetan monks for the Geshe Degree; instead, the task was given to the state-run academic program managed by the Chinese Buddhist Association (Global Times 2018). We shall see in the following what ramifications this policy of regulating religion has had on the religious subjects of Yachen Gar and Larung Gar.

Chinese state's religious policies in the PRC and its controlled regions have gone through many transitions. During the formation of the Chinese Communist Party(CCP), the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department of the Party centre colluded to manipulate the organisational element in the religious and national institutions. Under Mao, the United Front established "patriotic" religious associations (Leung 2005, 897). This mainly comprised the regulation of religious undertakings, staff and severing of religious organisations. After the Cultural Revolution, a semblance of normalcy was seen with the Deng Xiaoping's 'reform era." However, the focus quickly shifted on the reconstruction of the national image in the international platform and the promotion of "unity" among "national minorities" (Leung 2005). In the religious sphere, the CCP re-introduced religious freedom policy. The Document 19 issued in 1982, however, stated to "win over, unite and educate [politically]the religious professionals", and although the CCP could not restrict the religious leaders but desired to limit the expansion

of religious influence (Leung 2005, 903). Many factors including the June 4 movement in 1989 and the Lhasa uprising from 1987 prompted the state to tighten the upsurge in religious practice. Therefore, in the Jiang Zemin era, a new approach to religious management was adopted. Jiang Zemin's "accommodation policy", religion was co-opted as a stabilising force to use it for the benefit of social development and national cohesion (BLeung 2005, 908-911). Presently, Xi Jinping's religious policy of "sinicization" necessitates that the religions must be incorporated into Chinese socialist characteristics (Madsen 2019). Since the commencement of Tibet Work Forum or the National Forum on Work in Tibet in 1980, the party has introduced a steady line of policies to be implemented in TAR. However, since the fifth forum, all Tibetan areas outside of the so-called TAR have also been included in the Tibet Work Forum's formulation of policy (Tseten 2020). The Sixth and Seven Tibet Work Forum had emphasized on the oft-repeated terminologies used in such meetings organised by and for the top Chinese authorities. With Xi Jinping presiding over, the policy of "ten musts" and adherence of Tibetan Buddhism to Chinese characteristics has been yet again announced (Tseten 2020). It is in the backdrop of these state's religious policies over the years where the state's activities in Yachen Gar and Larung Gar in Tibetan regions of Kham should be viewed and analysed.

Tibetan Buddhism, State, and Tibetan Nuns

In Tibetan traditional religious practices, adherence to monastic norms and vows is considered important to preserve Tibetan monastic space and religious values. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's vision for a strict maintenance of celibacy amongst monks and nuns is an important example of religious preservation against the backdrop of the state's disregard for such acts of religious practices. Larung Gar and Yachen Gar are two important Buddhist academies that have become religious attractions for many Buddhist followers and practitioners in Tibet and China.

In Larung Gar, the nuns were initially unable to receive Khenpo Jigme Phunstok's teachings but in 1991 the construction of the assembly hall had enabled both nuns and monks to receive these teachings equally. Describing the distinction of gendered space for upholding the religious

code, David Germano describes, "In this new hall a line of flowers splits monks and nuns and there are different doors for entry and exit so as to prevent interaction that could lead to breaches of the code of celibacy" (Germano 1998, 67). Although Yachen Gar and Larung Gar were established at the time of a relatively relaxed political and religious climate, the growing population at these institutions have surpassed thousands over the years. The inclusive characteristics of Larung Gar lie in the naming of the institution as "ecumenical." The institutions have also become an important space to advance Buddhist scholarship for the nuns (Taylor 2020, 243). Naturally, it had appealed to a broader Tibetan nun's population in Tibet. Perhaps, the least known fact about these institutions (and of Bha Lhagong, situated in Sertha) is that these institutions have female practitioners who have acquired Khenmo Degrees (degree equivalent to PhD in Buddhist studies given to nuns), started in the 1990s. Although it is unclear as what factor led to the conferment of Khenmo degrees to the nuns, research conducted on the khenmo programme cites the influence of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok (Taylor 2020, 242). However, there is "a lack of standardised curriculum" for Khenmos as in each of these institutions the curriculum varies from one another (Say 2019). The mode of practice differ for these women as Larung Gar's Khenmos were encouraged to study Tibetan Buddhist and religious texts while Yachen Gar's Khenmos were encouraged towards the ritual and practice of the Dharma. Both of their founders have established the institutions to "revive Buddhist scholarship and meditation" (Germano 1998). The development of Tibetan Buddhist tradition with accommodation for gender parity is an unprecedented act in the Tibetan monastic history. Due to the incorporation of Khenmo programme into Larung Gar institution, a large number of nuns have travelled from across Tibet (three traditional and historical regions of Tibet) to pursue religious education as these centres are also known for their excellent religious curriculum (Say 2019). The nuns have to go through a rigorous set of study programmes before they could qualify for the Khenmo programme (Taylor 2020).

Since then, nuns and Khenmos have written and published religious books in both Tibetan and Chinese languages. During the initial stage of the establishment, both institutions have grown to be a major concentration

of nuns and monks estimating 10,000 in population (Germano 1998, 65). As the nun population grew rapidly in the 1990s, a nunnery had formed, down the academy at Larung Gar, called Pema Khandro Duling Nunnery, led by Ani Muntsho, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's niece in 1996 (Germano 1998, 67). The most important work carried out by khenmos at Larung Gar was compilation and publication of a set of commentaries and writings on and of women in Buddhism (Padma' tsho 2020, 7-10). In 2013, according to the researchers, the publication house, headed by Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar, called "Larung Arya Tare Book Association Editorial Office" published 16th Volume anthology of *Garland of White Lotuses: The Biographies of the Great Female Masters of India and Tibet.* In 2017, they published 53-volume compilation called *Dakinis' Great Dharma Treasury' focusing on writings of Buddhist women from India, Tibet, Nepal and China* (Padma' tsho 2020, 7-10). Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Buddhist Institutions are an important locus of empowerment for Tibetan nuns for whom Buddhist principles are intrinsic to their subjectivity. These spaces are also focal point of nuns' empowerment, evidenced in the manner in which rigorous pursuing of Tibetan traditional Buddhist scholarship was encouraged with conferment of khenmo degrees for Tibetan nuns.

Against the backdrop of these vibrant monastic communities where the nuns seem to be on equal footing with their male counterparts, Chinese authorities' intrusion into these monastic institutions have given a compellingly different shade to Larung Gar and Yachen Gar. Woesel Nyima's prose piece entitled, *From Larung Gar* that was later translated from Tibetan into English and republished attests to the fact of demolition and expulsion of Tibetan nuns and monks (highpeakspureearth 2016). The author of the essay especially mourns the demolition of Tibetan nuns and monks' quarters and their subsequent expulsion calling it "Black months and Year." This piece was originally published on 25 October, 2016, on WeChat but it is said to have later been removed from the platform. The piece is also important in the sense how it is giving local point of view regarding the whole situation of demolition and expulsion in Larung Gar which the state carried out beginning in 2016.

While the state's policy targets to transform Tibet's landscape and

Tibetan subjectivities through development discourse, a method which Emily Yeh calls "Territorialisation", Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns are marked as contradiction to the state's development project due to Tibetan monks and nuns' association with more traditional aspect of Tibet (Yeh 2013, 38). With state's intrusion into these spaces by the Chinese authorities, the spaces have become not only restricted for Tibetan nuns who may want to pursue religious careers in future but also have created marginalisation for Tibetan nuns who are expelled from the institutions.[3] The institutions of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar have been through important transitions in recent years. There was a large-scale demolition of living quarters of nuns and monks. And later they were also driven out of the centres. Upon closer inspection, the drive to demolish and remove nuns from the living quarters is carried out upon the instructions of local authorities of the region. In the beginning of 2016, i.e., before the demolition, the estimated population of Tibetan Buddhist nuns and monks, foreign practitioners, lay practitioners at Larung Gar amounts to 20,000 (TCHRD 2018, 54-55). In 2017, Yachen Gar's nun population is estimated to be over 10,000[4] before it was sealed-off in April 2019 (Cho 2019, 499). The reason that were given for the expulsion and demolition by the authorities were "construction development" for a process of "accelerated urbanisation" to "a more orderly, beautiful, secure and peaceful place"[5] (International Campaign for Tibet 2017, 12). However, the exile sources have claimed that

3. Padma'tsho in her article "Courage as Eminence: Tibetan nuns at Yarchen Monastery in Kham", states that Tibetan nuns at Yachen Gar have come from different parts of Tibetan regions, and their main motivation to come at Yachen Gar is because there is a dearth of lama at their home temples where they could advance and practice Tibetan Buddhism. In an article entitled "Yachen as Process: Encampments, Nuns, and Spatial Politics in Post-Mao Tibet", Yasmin Cho points out that Tibetan nuns at Yachen Gar haven faced cultural and social biases when they wanted to pursue religious careers.
4. However, Padma'tsho states, in her 2014 article, that the total population of monastic residents at Yachen is over 7,000, including, 5,070 nuns and 1,500 monks. A small percentage of monastics are non-Tibetan.
5. According to International campaign for Tibet (ICT), reasons such as "fire hazards", "safety measures", "over-population" and "unregistered residency" were also given. However, based on testimony of local Tibetans at Larung Gar, expulsion and demolition were "not in any way motivated by safety and modernizing concerns."

demolition of the living quarters is a larger plan to subvert Tibetan Buddhism by constructing places of tourist attraction in the Larung Gar valley (International Campaign for Tibet 2017). The evicted nuns of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar were usually nuns whose hometowns are outside of the Sertha region.

However, the wave of expulsion and demolition had also occurred at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in 2001 when the local authorities had expelled nuns and demolished their homes (Tibet Information Network 2002, 50-58). In June 2001, a group of officials from the United Font Work Unit and regional authorities had come to examine the population of the Larung Gar institution and demolition of the quarters. The size of the population of the Larung Gar was decided to be restricted at 1000 monks and 400 nuns. Around October in 2001, Yachen Buddhist Institution was met with the same fate of demolition and expulsion. The Payul's County's Peoples Government had put up a wall poster stating that after examining the state of the Yachen Gar institute, "well-coordinated care, protection and good work is needed." The announcement further stated that the monks and nuns whose residents were "outside the boundary" had to demolish their living quarters by the 15th September, if it was not done as instructed, they would be punished as per the legal system and their homes would be "forcibly" demolished by the Payul County People's Government. Monks and nuns were to leave the institute by the same date, failing to do that would have legal consequences. Both these directives of the institutes indicate that monks and nuns who did not belong to the local areas had to return to their hometowns. However, Tibetan nuns who usually did not have home monastery found themselves in a situation where they did not have any place to go (Tibet Information Network 2002, 53-55). The nuns who did not belong to Payul and Serthar county had to leave while it may not be the same for the monks. Most monks who were expelled could return to their home monastery (Tibet Information Network 2002, 53-55)[6].

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6. This information is based on an interview conducted in 2002 by Tibet Information Network to a monk who had recently come into exile from Larung Gar in Kham.

The same wave of eviction of nuns and monks resumed in 2016. State orders for demolition of Larung Gar in 2016 was the first fresh order outlined and issued by the prefecture-level government (Human Rights Watch 2016). The directives emphasised that save for 5,000 homes all other homes of nuns, monks and laypeople would be demolished.[7] This decision was taken at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum Conference and the second National Work Conference on Religion presided by Xi Jinping. In a June 2016 announcement entitled "Correction and Rectification Obligations for the Larung monastery Buddhist Institute in Serta County" was issued by the county government to local government. The announcement comprised a set of activities that are to be implemented in the institute within a stipulated time. It included reduction of the population of practitioners to 5,000, which included 3,500 nuns and 1,500 monks that must be achieved by September 2017. Installation of surveillance camera and writing of compliance letters by monks and nuns is stated in the order and the list of names of expelled nuns and monks for 2016 to be presented to the highest authorities by 15 June and 15 July, 2016. This order has also stressed on "legal education" that is to be implemented within monastery every month in 2016 (Human Rights Watch 2016).

Throughout 2016, the eviction of Tibetan monks, nuns and non-Tibetan practitioners was carried out. There are reports of the relocation of those displaced nuns to neighbouring Tibetan areas. However, in a video that went viral on social media shows a group of 25 Tibetan women wearing military outfits singing a song, part of which says, "The Tibetans and Chinese are daughters of the same mother, the name of the mother is China" (TCHRD 2017). In a similar video, a group of 12 nuns was dancing to a song called "The Song of the Emancipated Serfs" on a stage (International Campaign for Tibet 2017)[8].

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7. According to Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) report of 2017, 4828 religious practitioners were expelled from the Larung Gar academy by early April 2018 demolishing 4725 monastic dwellings.

8. According to Robert Barnett's post on Facebook on December 1, 2016, those nuns were expelled from Larung Gar. Robert Barnett writes "The song was originally performed in front of Chairman Mao in 1959, the banner above the stage reads 'Graduation Art Show for the Law and Politics Training Course for Buddhist Monks

In 2013 as well, the nuns studying at Larung Gar but originally from Central Tibet (Ch: TAR) were detained and threatened with criminal consequences if they returned to continue their studies.(TCHRD 2017). In a TCHRD report in 2018, a monk's first-hand account has acknowledged the presence of centres called "transformation through education" in Tibet.[9] In the centre where he was detained, situated in Sog County in Nagchu Prefecture, also consisted of nuns and monks (and few laypersons) who were expelled from "monastic institutions located outside TAR in the past several years" (TCHRD 2018). The testimony also includes detention officers perpetrating sexual assaults against nuns in the 'camp.'[10] Larung Gar is an important Tibetan Buddhist space. The space that uniquely served to revive the traditional Buddhist scholarship, envisioned and implemented by the Tibetan founding masters and Tibetan religious subjects themselves. However, the state-influenced policy has rendered the organic capacity of the space into the state's space to implement its policy. In July 2016, three nuns had died of suicide (TCHRD 2018). A nun named Tsering Dolma, one of the nuns, had left a suicide note in Tibetan, stating:
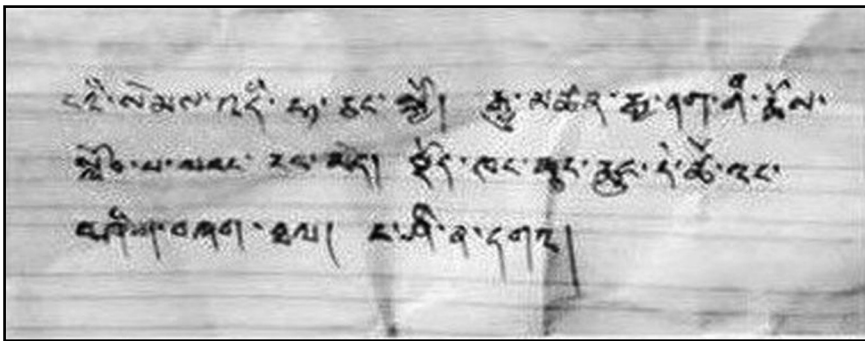
Original copy of the note. Source: (Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) Annual Report 2017)

and Nuns, Gongbujiangda County'. The video is from Kongpo Gyamda county, in Nyingtri (Linzhi) Tibet, and is believed to have been filmed on Nov 10. The nuns must have been forced to perform this dance, presumably as a form of public humiliation, since such performance violates their religious vow. The nuns are probably among those recently expelled from Larung Gar monastic encampment in Serta (Sichuan)."
9. The classes in the camp included "military exercise" which would lead some of them to faint and which would be followed by beating.
10. The monk has not stated in his testimony where the nuns were expelled from but it hints that the nuns had definitely come outside of "Tibetan Autonomous Region."

> My heart is so sad. The reason is the Chinese government does not allow us the freedom to practice our religion. Even the tiny shelters have been destroyed. It is better to die (TCHRD 2018, 56).

These deaths point to a larger and broader structure of policies that stand in opposition to the subjectivity of these nuns and decapacitates their agency. Tibetan nuns when they were evicted from the institutions, most of them do not have any place to go (TCHRD 2018, Tibet Information Network 2002). I argue that the highly entertained notion of Tibetan women's empowerment as highlighted through the state's media contradicts the reality of the Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar on the ground. The nuns in turn are subjected to different levels of marginalisation against the state's looming "sinicized" policies at the expense of Tibetan nuns' subjectivity. Oostveen states that "temporary" encampments built by the nuns of Yachen Gar undermines the "territorialisation" of the Tibetan culture by the Chinese state (Oostveen 2020, 2). However, through the various evidences presented above, I argue that the agency defined by these nuns comes in conflict with the state's intervention into their spaces and the state's propagandistic work to painting them as "law abiding citizens" (Global Times 2012).

Conclusion

Chinese state's narrative on gender and "women's liberation campaign" in Tibet has primarily been driven by development discourse. Since China's occupation of Tibet, traditional Tibetan family structure, particularly polyandry and Tibetan Buddhism are stated as contributing factors to the "low" status of Tibetan women. The Deng Xiaoping's reform era welcomed the idea of working-women across China, yet there are structural inequalities embedded within the workplace where women were discriminated against. The whole idea of the reform era made women adhere to stricter gender roles by becoming "socialist housewives." We have seen in the past that the project of development in Tibet is created at the cost of disadvantages reserved for Tibetans, who were not accorded equal opportunity in the ground, however, Tibetan women are even more discriminated against (Makley 1997)

However, through the state's media discourse the status of Tibetan women's empowerment is attributed to economic achievement. By contrasting the status of Tibetan women in "Old Tibet" and "New Tibet", the project of economic development is hammered into gender discourse in Tibet today. It is further clubbed together with the colonial discourse of development where it made it look as though the development of Tibetan women is solely possible under the "benevolent rule" of Chinese Communist State where Tibetan women's "emancipation" becomes, to borrow Shivji's words, "subject matter of poverty reduction strategy papers." While on the one hand, the discourse of development is used to portray the "higher" status of Tibetan women under the Communist Chinese Party, the larger question about Tibetan nuns' agency for whom state's religious policies in Tibet has made them vulnerable in all aspects of their religious lives. Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar have been facing state-sanctioned expulsion and demolition of their living quarters which have deeply restricted their "agential capacity." The sense of agency that the Tibetan nuns have gained and continue to gain especially with the conferment of Khenmo degree from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar. Tibetan Buddhist institutions have become an important intersectional space for women empowerment and religious empowerment.[11] The Chinese colonial representation of Tibetan women through media overshadows the status of Tibetan nuns where Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet has become increasingly 'sinicized' under the state's supervision in Tibet.

Thus, this paper has discussed the Chinese state's use of development discourse to portray the status of Tibetan women in "higher" roles under its rule. The use of such discourse is accompanied with contrasting the old image and colourful images, and sometimes rhetorical writings in state media. However, on the one hand, the state's claim of Tibetan womens as "emancipated" is contradicted by its treatment of Tibetan female Buddhist practitioners for whom markers of religious identity are important to their sense of agency. By particularly discussing the state's

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11. The point is the same point I have argued in my article "How China Is Supressing Tibetan Buddhist Nuns, 'Erasing Identity", published on quint. https://www. thequint.com/voices/opinion/tibetan-buddhist-nuns-women-suppression-re-education-camps-sinicisation-chinese-state-xi-jinping

treatment of Tibetan nuns in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar in recent years, this paper has eventually dwelled on the Tibetan nuns' agency and how its concept cannot be measured and found within the metrics defined by the Chinese state. Thus, the claim of Tibetan women's "emancipated" status becomes propagandistic against the treatment and the status of Tibetan nuns' in Larung Gar and Yachen Gar.

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Tibet: Securing the Security, Soft Power and the Source of Water for India and Asia.[1]

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Abstract

Perhaps it is viable to say that the commonality between India and Tibet is far greater than any other neighbouring countries in the world. India's greatest gifts to Tibet are Buddhism and Tibetan script. Both Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan script owe their origin and development to the immense contributions from the eminent Indian gurus and scholars. However, the centuries-old traditional friendly neighbour was lost on the day when Tibet was invaded on the ground of its strategic location and resources by the resurgent Communist China. It is a shared dream of more than half the world's population, collectively it becomes—Asian Dream, heralding an Asian Century. It seems from the past and current developments, if Tibet continues to remain a geopolitical hostage, soon in the future, the conflicts on the India-Tibet border, and conflicts in Asia over water could become a source of major conflict in the region. In short, securing Tibet is not only about the Tibetan people and Tibetan culture, it is more about securing the permanent security of India and Asia at large.

Keywords: Tibet, India, China, Geopolitics, Soft Power, Water-Security

Introduction

The relations between Tibet, India and China are best illustrated in the words of Claude Arpi, a noted historian and journalist who has written a series of important books on Tibet, India and China, including *The Fate*

of Tibet: When Big Insects Eat Small Insects. Arpi writes: It is interesting to note that in the history of the three nations, Tibet and China always had a relation based on force and power, while Tibet and India had more of a cultural and religious relationship based on shared spiritual values (Arpi 1999, 29). With the above words as a background, perhaps it is viable to say that the commonality between India and Tibet is far greater than any other neighbouring countries in the world. India's greatest gifts to Tibet are Buddhism and Tibetan script. Both Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan script owe their origin and developments to the immense contributions from the eminent Indian gurus and scholars. While Tibet's greatest gift to India is the preservation and development of Buddhism based on the Nalanda tradition (Hindustan Times 2015). According to the Dalai Lama, the best interpretation of Buddhist tradition based on Nalanda masters is available only in Tibetan language. Thus, it shows the bond and enduring connectivity between these two nations in the past. On the other hand, Tibet has long been India's natural and friendly neighbour, providing a natural barrier between India and other inner Asian countries including China. However, the centuries-old traditional friendly neighbour was lost on the day when Tibet was invaded on the ground of its strategic location and resources by the resurgent Communist China. With this new development, India found herself before a new and very unfriendly neighbour. For the following reasons, Tibet still hold a very important role in turning an Asian tragedy into an Asian century.

This article is divided into three parts. First, it analyses that one of the important sources of China's dominance in Asia is Tibet. Then, it explores the idea that Buddhism, particularly, Tibetan Buddhism could be an important source for India's soft power diplomacy in the future and it also throws light on Beijing's recent engagement with Buddhism to promote its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Finally, this article deals with an impending water security challenges in Asia, because of Beijing's frenzied constructions of dams all over China, including in Tibet.

Tibet: A Source of China's Dominance and India's Strategic Dividend

For far too long, if one recalls, there is no mention of 'war of that

intensity' like that of China's India War[2] of 1962 in recorded histories of India, Tibet and China. The porous border between India and Tibet allowed an easy passage for the traders from India to Tibet and vice versa. Claude Arpi has this to say about the porous border, trade and Indo-Tibet relations, "For centuries, the Himalaya saw a constant flow of Tibetan lamas, pandits and yogis visiting the great Indian viharas of Nalanda, Odantapuri or Vikramsila..."He further added, "The fact is that when neighbouring states are on friendly terms, it is not too difficult to find an agreed frontier; when one faces an expansionist, aggressive neighbour, it is more difficult. It was how the relations between the Himalayan region and Tibet had worked for centuries. India and Tibet were neighbours and friends" (Arpi 2020). With the enforced disappearance of a friendly neighbour, Tibet, unlike in the past, where traders from India and Tibet frequented the Himalayan mountains is now replaced by gun-toting People's Liberation Army (PLA) on the soil of Tibet. In a letter dated 7 November, 1950, addressed to India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel shared the importance of Tibet as a friendly neighbour and its implications if Tibet was invaded by China. He writes:

> We have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet, as we knew it, and the expansion of China up to our gates. Throughout history we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas have regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble (India Tibet Coordination Office 2008, 17).

All things changed soon after the complete invasion of Tibet by China. For China, Tibet was that strategic back-door, and in the words of first internationally recognised Tibetan scholar and Tibetologist, Professor

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2. See Bertil Lintner, *China's India War* (2018). This author has only employed the title of the book to indicate that the main cause of conflict between India and China in 1962 is CCP-controlled China. Because most of earlier literature are predominated by the book, *India's China War* written by Neville Maxwell (1997). Where he argues that China was the victim of Nehru's hostile policies. Because of which the CCP was provoked and was compelled to retaliate.

Dawa Norbu, "China began to perceive Tibet as 'the back-door' to China, as 'the lips of the mouth.' If the backdoor was open and occupied by a foreign power, China proper could not feel safe and secure" (Norbu 2001, 173). Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was swift and strategic enough that soon after gaining power in China, Tibet was invaded. Without losing much time, almost immediately after the signing of the so-called 17-Point-Agreement in 1951, the Chinese began constructing highways that would link Tibet with China for the first time in their history (Norbu 1979, 247). After entrenching in Tibet, CCP started building and strengthening its road networks, connecting all bordering regions of Tibet, including borders shared by Tibet with India. The construction of the Xinjiang-Tibet highway which was completed in 1957 passes through the Indian territory of Aksai Chin. This highway later became an important highway for military supply, which gave the PLA a great tactical advantage over ill-equipped Indian soldiers with poor logistical support (Tsultrim 2017).

Norbu was to the point when he said, "In fact, one of the main reasons for the Communist takeover of Tibet is strategic, rather than historical claims or ideological motives" (Norbu n.d., 176). It is not a mere coincidence that after the invasion of Tibet—China's prized geopolitical trophy which secured its vulnerable back-door, and also China's dynamic economic growth coincided with Beijing's discovery of Tibet as a vast and till now largely untapped source of minerals, water and energy. In addition to this, Chinese geologists have identified more than 130 minerals in Tibet "with significant reserves of the world's deposits of uranium, chromite, boron, lithium, borax, and iron" (Samphel 2012). With everything within its grasp, CCP finally started implementing its true strategic plans. From 1949-2005, China was involved in more than 23 territorial disputes involving around six countries. In these different disputes, China has initiated the use of force sixteen times in six different cases (Fravel 2008, 63). In most of these disputes, China had an upper hand and was stronger in dealing with different countries. Presently too, China is involved in a series of serious disputes with eight countries in these regions, South China Sea, East China Sea and India-Tibet border. All these disputes have a possibility of turning into a flashpoint with global consequences (BBC 2016).

All the above developments where the dominance of China prevails point to the significance of Tibet as aptly paraphrased by George Ginsburgs and Michael Mathos as early as 1964 in their book:

> He who holds Tibet dominates the Himalayan piedmont; he who dominates the Himalayan piedmont threatens the Indian subcontinent; and he who threatens the Indian subcontinent may well have all of South Asia within his reach and, with it, all of Asia (Ginsburgs and Mathos 1964, 210).

Weighing the geopolitical importance of Asia, this author would like to add his thoughts in the following way: Whoever holds Asia dominates the entire Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean; and he who dominates the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean may well have all of Eurasia within its reach and with it half of the world and much more. Hence because of Tibet's strategic importance, China has an upper hand in Asia. Buddhism is another domain, where China is trying to control because of its soft power appeal. However, unlike China, India has a better scope, because of its past spiritual connection to Buddhism as a land of its origin. In the following pages, this author will elaborate on how Tibetan Buddhism could be a source and strength for India's soft power diplomacy.

Tibetan Buddhism: A Source and Strength for India's Soft Power Diplomacy

Indian scholars and masters have contributed immensely to the development of Buddhism in Tibet. Hence it is no wonder that the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet at Samye known as Samye Mingyur Lhungyi Drupe Tsuklakhang which was modelled on Odantapuri Tsuklakhang in Bihar that was officially patronised by the Tibetan Emperor Trisong Detsen (755-798 AD) (Shakabpa 2010, 133). Later the monastery was constructed under the guidance of Shantarakshita, who was the abbot of Nalanda University at the time, and the Master Padmasambhava, for the study of Buddhism and training of monks (Samphel, Sonam, et al., 2017, 13). During the same period, there was a great debate between Pandita Kamalasila, a student of Shantarakshita and a monk named Hoshang Mahayana from China. The main topic of their debate centred on the correct path to attain enlightenment. It is

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said that the debate lasted for two years (792-794 AD). Finally, Pandita Kamalasila was declared a winner and he was presented a garland of flowers by Hoshang Mahayana. Later the Emperor decreed that the doctrine articulated by the Indians Buddhist scholars must be studied and followed in Tibet. Emperor Trisong Detsen's edict declared Buddhism as a state religion. Since then, Tibetans followed Indian monasticism as developed and practised in Nalanda, the great Buddhist monastic university in northern India (Samphel, Sonam, et al. 2017). This event validated the profound contributions made by the Indian scholars and masters in the development of Tibetan Buddhism as well as their flair and great erudition in the religious debate.

Soon under the guidance of Indian scholars and masters, the Tibetans translators were able to translate a tremendous number of Buddhist texts on tantra and dialectics into Tibetan language. The translation work of the Tibetan translators was so rich and voluminous, that the great Bengali scholar and also the abbot of Vikramshila University, Atisha (982-1054 AD), when visiting Samye Monastery found many Indian manuscripts, and he also noticed many manuscripts which were not to be found in India. Highly impressed and pleased with the rich repository of collections, the great Indian Master Atisha had this to say: "It seems the doctrine had first spread in Tibet, even more than in India" (Roerich 1949, 257).

It is ironic that at first Chinese monk named Hoshang Mahayana came to Tibet for a debate. Centuries later PLA soldiers came to invade Tibet and destroyed most of this treasury of Buddhist texts. In the early 1980s, only 13 monasteries were reportedly intact out of over 6000 monasteries and temples throughout Tibet (Samphel, Sonam, et al., 2017, 46-47). The destruction of around 6000 monasteries is equivalent to the destruction of 6000 dedicated Buddhist libraries in Tibet (Samphel, Sonam, et al. 2017, 60). This is a huge loss to the Buddhist followers all over the world. Currently, according to the Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, there are around 259 Tibetan monasteries and nunneries established in India, which also serves as institutions of higher Buddhist learning (Department of Religion 2011). Because of Tibetan Buddhism and

the Dalai Lama, every year thousands of people from all over the world visit India.

For instance, in the state of Bihar, as early as 2005, the total number of foreign tourists' visit to Bihar was 64,114. Out of this, the total number of foreign tourists' visit to Buddhist destinations was 45,149. The total number of foreign tourists' visit to non-Buddhist destinations was 18,965 (Market Research Division 2005, 47). In short, foreign tourists accounted for almost 70% of the traffic at Buddhist destinations and less than 29.5% at non-Buddhist destinations. In 2017 and 2018, the total number of foreign tourists' visit to Bihar were 108,2705 and 108,7971 (Market Research Division 2019, 101). In 2017, out of 36 states and union territories, Bihar is ranked at number 8, beating the popular tourist destinations like Goa (Triphati 2018). Coincidentally, in January 2017 Kalachakra initiation was held in Bodhgaya led by the Dalai Lama. According to the official website of Private Office of the Dalai Lama, the Kalachakra garnered around 200,000 people, which includes both domestic and foreign visitors (The Office of his Holiness the Dalai Lama n.d.). According to Bihar tourism department data, the month of January received 75,250 foreign tourists to Bodhgaya, which was the highest number of foreign tourists' visit in the year of 2017 (Bihar Tourism 2017). Similarly, from 8-28 January 2018, for around 18 days, teachings were given by the Dalai Lama in Bodhgaya (The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2018). In December 2018, the Dalai Lama gave ten-day teaching. Accordingly, the month of January 2018 had 57,928 foreign tourists' visit to Bodhgaya, which again was the highest number of foreign tourists' visit in the year of 2018. In December 2018, the number of foreign tourists' visit to Bodhgaya was 29,328, earning the fourth highest foreign tourists' arrivals in 2018. In short, in 2018 alone, the total number of foreign tourists' visit in Bodhgaya was 270,787, and the total number of foreign tourists' visit in the month of January and December was 87,256. Scholar Daya Kishan Thussu and researcher Shantanu Kishwar talk about a reinvigoration of Buddhist sites and India's image in the global Buddhist community because of the presence of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people (Thussu 2013, 161, Kishwar 2018, 5).

Hence Tibetan Buddhism has attracted enough foreign tourists within the span of two months. This writer believes that this trend could be followed effectively all over the Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India. Greg C. Bruno in his book revealed that with 13.1 million followers, the Dalai Lama was more popular on Twitter than the presidents of Turkey, France and Israel combined (Bruno 2018, xii). Currently, the Dalai Lama has 19.3 million followers on his Twitter handle @DalaiLama. This writer found that on Twitter, the Dalai Lama has more followers than the combined Twitter followers of extended propaganda departments of the CCP -- The Global Times, China Daily, the People's Daily (China), spokesperson Hua Chunying, spokesman Lijian Zhao, Chinese ambassadors and embassy official accounts of the UK, USA, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Austria. This development shows that the Dalai Lama of Tibet is excelling in its battle against the CCP in the realm of soft power diplomacy.

Thubten Samphel, the former director of the Tibet Policy Institute, CTA, Dharamshala, and also a prolific commentator on issues relating to Tibet and China in his monograph, writes: "On the overall fate of Tibet, China might be winning the war but in this specific battle Tibet's soft power is making huge strikes in convincing increasing numbers of Chinese scholars and writers to tell the Tibet story to a Chinese audience" (Samphel 2017, 2). He further added that, "Tibetan ability to tell their story convincingly to the Chinese might determine the outcome of the story itself" (Samphel 2017, 16). Hence the victory of Tibet's soft power is also a victory of India's soft power as well. In order to make soft power roll effectively, one needs to lay the groundwork for the future. A few things the Government of India (GOI) could do to strengthen its base for its soft power diplomacy is to provide encouragement and scholarships to the Indian students interested in studying Tibetan language. Because almost all the rich essence of Buddhist tradition based on Nalanda tradition is available only in Tibetan language. For this to be effective, encouragement should be given to the Indian students to learn Tibetan language as early as possible. Because without the understanding of Tibetan language, it is difficult to understand the concept of Tibetan Buddhism. And without the comprehensive knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism,

it is difficult to comprehend Buddhist tradition of Nalanda and to evoke India's soft power diplomacy. This author thinks now loyal *Chela*(disciple) is in a position to repay his *guru-dakshina*[3] in the form of preaching and teaching of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan language. To begin with, GOI could employ the resources of Tibetan language teachers on a pilot basis in each state, and particularly in Buddhist sites.

Currently there are few Tibetan institutes and others teaching the Tibetan language, Tibetan literature, Buddhist philosophy and these institutes are also important places for conducting research and furthering Buddhist scholarship. They are, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives(LTWA), Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, College for Higher Tibetan Studies (Sarah), Dharamshala, the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore, Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamshala (is a research-based centre currently managed single-handedly by renowned Tibetan Tibetologist, historian, Tashi Tsering), Songtsen Library (also called Center for Tibetan and Himalayan Studies) in Dehradun, north India, Manjushree Centre of Tibetan Culture, Darjeeling and Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok. Another thing the GOI could do is to lay the foundation and establishment of world's biggest dedicated Buddhist Library, which may do wonder in attracting Buddhist scholars, teachers and millions of followers of Buddhism all around the world. In this part both Bihar and the Central governments are its key stakeholders. The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) is already doing immense services and attracting thousands of scholars and students from all around the world. LTWA and Songtsen Library could be the role models for the establishment of future Buddhist library(ies) in India.

Already CCP-controlled China is spending huge amounts of money to legitimise their affiliation to Buddhism and till now Beijing has organised its Fifth World Buddhist Forum to reinforce its links with countries, where Buddhism has strong influence (Varma 2020). Not only this, Beijing is also promoting Buddhism, including Tibetan Buddhism to soften their erratic image and push its BRI's projects in the Buddhist-populated countries. In the following pages, this issue will be discussed.

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3. It roughly refers to the tradition of repaying one's teacher.

Tibetan Buddhism in the Age of the Belt and Road Initiative

The CCP's current legitimacy in China is largely based on performance-based legitimacy. Hence, in order to have a steady inflow and outflow of resources and services to sustain their goliath economy. People's Republic of China (PRC) under Xi Jinping has introduced a massive project in the form of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The CCP-led government also spends millions of dollars in South and Southeast Asian countries to link their Buddhist heritage to facilitate soft landing of BRI (Dorjee 2019). The PRC is working through different projects such as the US $3 Billion Lumbini project in Nepal, and the recent US $ 1.1 billion loan to the island nation of Sri-Lanka to build a motorway, to soften its erratic image and woo countries having a significant amount of Buddhist population in their BRI projects (Abeynayake 2018). Nepal, Sri-Lanka, Mongolia, Bhutan, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Vietnam are countries where there are significant numbers of Buddhist population.

In order to use Buddhism in the promotion of BRI, China is trying to legitimise and appropriate their asserted spiritual ownership of Buddhism in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular. In 2018, a two-day symposium was organised in Tsongon (Ch. Qinghai) region of Tibet to discuss how Tibetan Buddhism could better serve China's Belt and Road Initiative and resist separatism (Han 2018). Qin Yongzhang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is quoted in the Global Times saying that, "Tibetan Buddhism can serve as a bridge between Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries to better communicate with each other, since the religious and cultural beliefs are similar in Central and South Asia." He further added that, "One immediate challenge of promoting BRI through Tibetan Buddhism comes from India, which has been holding back for geopolitical reasons…" (Han 2018). In the recently concluded seventh Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing on August 29-30, 2020, where Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the CCP emphasised that, "Tibetan Buddhism be guided in adapting to the socialist society and should be developed in the Chinese context" (CGTN 2020). Hence, all the above developments indicate that the CCP is planning to promote BRI extensively through Tibetan Buddhism.

In this race for Buddhist's soft power, unlike China, India has not only a younger population, but one already equipped with the English language. This means they are in a better position to express India's soft power in a positive way. In the struggle for Buddhist soft power diplomacy, China will be struggling to learn both Tibetan and English languages. For this soft power diplomacy to succeed, India needs to make smart choices and take concrete steps. While on the other hand, CCP in order to secure its political stability in China and its enforced legitimacy in its occupied territories, (Tibet, East Turkistan, Southern Mongolia) it has spent billions of dollars in infrastructure developments, invasive surveillance systems and other politically- motivated social welfare schemes. Similar to this, in order to secure its water security in the future, for the past few decades, because of its frenzied constructions of dams all over China, including in Tibet, China has been dubbed as the most dammed nation in the world (Buckley 2014, 189). In the following pages, this issue will be delved in detail.

Tibet's Rivers: A Source of Lifeline to Nearly Two Billion People in India and Asian Countries

It is no wonder that in the past most of the major civilizations of the world, including the Indus Valley Civilization, Mesopotamian Civilization, Egyptian Civilization had all developed and flourished near rivers. This is because water formed an important part of human life and development. Rivers provide a steady supply of freshwater for drinking and for agriculture. Besides rivers are rich source for fish, a fertile land, and an easy navigation from one place to another. The Tibetan Plateau is known as the Water Tower of Asia, because ninety percent of the runoff from Tibet's rivers flow downstream into China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan (Buckley 2014, 1). It also provides a steady supply of ecosystem services (fresh water, food, energy). In short, the status of the plateau of Tibet is unique and the Tibetan plateau plays a triple role -- It is Asia's main freshwater repository, largest water supplier, and principal rainmaker of Asia (Chaturvedi 2014, 101).

Michael Buckley, an award-winning Canadian journalist and author of a very important book *Meltdown in Tibet* which exposes that after genocide

in Tibet, China is now on a mission to exploit Tibet's natural resources leading to the ongoing destruction of Tibet's environment, calling it "Ecocide" (Buckley 2014, 13). Buckley writes, "At the tail end of those same rivers lie the world's largest deltas. One way or another, close to 2 billion people rely on Tibet's waters—for drinking, for agriculture, for fishing, for industry." Rivers are still providing the similar ecosystem services to the downstream Asian countries what it had provided for centuries without any natural or a man-made interruption. Now with China's construction of series of dams, it is bringing a rapid ecological change. Currently China is one of the most dammed countries in the world. For centuries, one of the reasons for China's constructions of the Great Wall was for its security from the militant nomads from its neighbouring steppes. Now the CCP is building a series of dams, which is also dubbed as the Great Wall of Concrete for its "Water security" by Buckley, thereby endangering the security and livelihood of downstream Asian countries.

Dechen Palmo, a Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), a think-tank of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) based in Dharamshala, who specializes on Tibet's transboundary rivers and impacts of China's damming on China-occupied Tibet, she writes: "Over the last seven decades, the People's Republic of China has constructed more than 87,000 dams. Collectively they generate 352.26 GW of power, more than the capacities of Brazil, the United States, and Canada combined. On the other hand, these projects have led to the displacement of over 23 million people" (Palmo 2019). Not only this, out of 87,000 dams, since 1950s, China has built over 22,000 large dams[4] which are more than 15 meters in height (Lewis 2013). Imagine the irreversible damage these 87,000 dams which also include 22,000 large dams could do to the entire Asian population, who for centuries enjoyed free flow of fresh water from free and independent Tibet. In Tibet too, as argued by Tempa Gyaltsen Zamlha, a Senior Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute, that "Tibet has seen an unprecedented number of natural disasters occurring simultaneously across the region since 2016,

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4. The World Commission on Dams defines a "large dam" as one being "at least 15 meters [40 feet] in wall height from the base up, or having a reservoir containing at least 3 million cubic meters of water" (M. Buckley 2014, 46).

primarily due to rising temperatures and increased rainfall. Furthermore, the situation has been exacerbated by a number of other factors such as excessive construction activities, destructive mode of lithium mining, a cascade of dams along the river, and state-sanctioned felling of trees in some areas of the valley" (Zamlha 2020).

National Geographic (Lovgren 2019) and Michael Buckley (2014), highlighted the impacts of dams in the following ways -- The high wall of dams itself block the migration of different species of fish and other aquatic species. It also blocks the flow of the nutrient-rich sediments, leading to the disappearance of birds in floodplains, huge losses of forest, wetland, farmland, erosion of coastal deltas, and many other unmitigable impacts. The blocking of water will also severely impact the irrigation-oriented Asian countries. The great amount of water is utilized in Asia for irrigation of rice, cotton and rubber. Half the production of rice in the world are produced and consumed by India and China. Rice is also a staple food in Burma, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia.

According to United Nations report titled, *World Population Prospects 2019*, the world's population is likely to number between 8.5 and 8.6 billion by 2030. Between 9.4 and 10.1 billion by 2050, and between 9.4 and 12.7 billion by 2100 (World Population Prospects 2019, 1). Rice being one of the most widely consumed grains in the world and particularly in Asia, naturally more rice is needed by 2050 (Shahbandeh 2020). Rice being a water-intensive crop, needs a large volume of water for its production. Without the free flow of rivers from the plateau of Tibet to the downstream Asian countries, which comprises eight countries producing highest volume of milled rice production in the world. Hence, a shortage of water will severely impact the growth and production of rice and food security in the region. To add a further burden to the growing population by 2050, a research paper titled, *Projections of Water Stress Based on an Ensemble of Socioeconomic Growth and Climate Change Scenarios: A Case Study in Asia,* published on 30 March, 2016 by a team of research scientists from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) finds that, "Economic and population growth on top of climate change could lead to serious water shortages across a

broad swath of Asia by the year 2050." The MIT researchers also found that by 2050 in Asia, it would lead to about one billion more people becoming "water-stressed" (Fant and et.al 2016, 28). Hence the scarcity of water might change the course of relations between Asian countries at large and might repeat what has already happened in the past over the question of water.

For the reasons mentioned above, many conflicts had risen over the ownership of what has been described as the blue gold in the world. The Pacific Institute, a policy research think-thank founded in 1987, currently based out of Oakland, California, has remarkably documented the number of small and large-scale conflicts fought throughout centuries over water. According to their research study, the causes of water conflicts have been categorised into three sections: 1) "Trigger", water as a root cause of conflict, where there is a dispute over the control of water or waterways. 2) "Weapon", water as a weapon of conflict, where water resources are used as a tool or weapon in a violent conflict. 3) "Casualty", water resources as a casualty of conflict, where water resources are intentional targets of violence (Pacific Institute 2018). Through this categorisation, the institute has documented around 926 conflicts over water as early as 3000 B.C. From the above developments in the past and China's frenzied construction of thousands of dams and which is still an ongoing issue, one cannot deny the fact that water is soon going to be a very contentious resource and it is only a matter of time, as envisaged by India's leading expert on geostrategy, Brahma Chellaney in his book, *Water: Asia New Battleground*. If China's current unscientific and high-pace construction of mega-dam to monster dam[5] continues unchecked, soon for this mega-problem, there will be transnational environmental movement across the Asian countries against China's monopolistic control over Tibet's rivers. Hence, depending on the political future of Tibet, if given a genuine autonomy, Tibet's rivers could become a "source of cooperation" in Asia and if ignored or undermined like before, Tibet's rivers could become a "source of conflict" in Asia.

Asia is not only about China Dream: advancing its strategic or national

5. A term aptly coined by Michael Buckley, referring to a dam which is over 250 meters (800 feet) in wall height.

or party interests while undermining every interests of its neighbouring countries, including their strategic interests. Rather it is a combined dreams of Asian countries to bring forth what Asian people have been dreaming of together---An Asian Century. It is a shared dream of more than half of the world's population, collectively it becomes—Asian Dream and heralding an Asian Century. India has a great role to play in a few decades and Tibet too in soft power department has the potential to become an ally of India's role in the advancement or realization of the Asian dream. People of Asia should know that India has been dreaming of Asian Century with cooperation among Asian countries as early as 1940s, even when India had not gained her independence (Kesavapany 2008, 92). While on the other hand, the CCP started invading its neighbour —Tibet in October 1950 soon after grasping power in China (Shakya 1999, 469). This tradition of hegemony is still being diligently followed by the CCP towards it most of neighbouring countries and extended neighbours. It seems from the past and current development, if Tibet continues to remain a geopolitical hostage, soon in the future, the conflicts in India-Tibet border and conflicts in Asia over the water may become a source of major conflict in the region. In short, securing Tibet is not only about the Tibetan people and Tibetan culture, it is more about securing a permanent security for India and Asia at large and it also concerns the food and water security in Asia.

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Revisiting China's Strategic Perceptions Toward Tibet and the Himalayas

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Abstract

The ongoing India-China military stalemate over the Indo-Tibet border in the Himalayas is the tip of the iceberg of China's expansionist policy on the Himalayan regions. China's military encroachments in India, Nepal and Bhutan have triggered geopolitical tensions in South Asia. These military encroachments are strategically implemented based on Mao's strategic blueprint of China's palm and the five-fingers strategy towards Tibet and the Himalayas. In this context, the centrality of Tibet in India-China relations is the key to understanding the nature of this conflict in the Himalayas. This paper examines the origin of India-China conflicts and China's strategic thinking over Tibet. In short, this paper attempts to highlight the geopolitical importance of Tibet in India-China relations and employs historical analysis of the Palm and the Fiver fingers strategy conceived by Mao. This author will build on Dawa Norbu's landmark study on China's strategic perceptions on Tibet and the Himalayas by drawing from recent literature on the subject.

Keywords: Tibet, India, China, Geo-strategy, Himalayas, Five-fingers

Introduction
India-China Conflicts in the Himalayas

India and China became two largest neighboring countries in Asia after Communist China's invasion of Tibet in the 1950s. Soon after the complete invasion of Tibet, China started cartographic aggression towards India and the Himalayan regions. India- China conflicts in the Himalayas started after the shifting of Indo-Tibet border into Sino-Indian border dispute. The disappearance of Tibet as a sovereign state escalated the conflicts between the two Asian giants.

Currently, China shares its borders with 14 countries. Excluding India,

the Chinese diplomats have partially resolved its border disputes with her neighboring countries. With India, China has the most enduring border disputes, lasting more than 60 years. Despite having 22 rounds of border talks between Special Representatives of India and China to resolve the Sino-Indian boundary conflicts. The dispute over the Indo-Tibet border between India and China still remains unresolved. Neville Maxwell, the author of India's China War, illustrated the nature of the Sino-Indian conflicts in these words: "The border dispute between India and China stands exactly where it did when it first emerged half a century ago. There have been no negotiations, just numerous rounds of "fruitless talks." Each side maintains claim over large tracts of the other's territory" (Maxwell 2011, 71).

The cartographic contestation over the Indo-Tibet border between India and China has triggered a series of Sino-Indian military face-offs and major conflicts in the Himalayas. For instance, China's India war of 1962 was one of the major wars which changed the dynamics of their relationship forever. The most recent confrontation between them is on 20 June, 2020. The violent military face-off in the eastern Ladakh is considered one of the deathliest clashes since the aftermath of India-China border war of 1962.

The India-China border dispute is one of the longest and protracted border disputes in the modern history of Asia. It was an offshoot of British India's forward policy towards Tibet and the Himalayas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After the departure of the British Empire from the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the South Asian political map has changed drastically. The partition of Bengal (later became Bangladesh in 1971) and China's territorial claims over Bhutan, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh exposed India's geopolitical vulnerability on its eastern Himalayas. "The Sino-Indian boundary has traditionally been divided into three sectors – the western sector extending from the Mustagh-Karakorum ranges in the Himalayas to the river Sutlej; the central sector stretching from the Sutlej to the border of the two countries with Nepal; and the eastern sector covering the stretch from China-India-Bhutan tri-junction" (K.N 2012, 11-12). China often claim these sectors on the basis of Tibet's historical relations with them.

Therefore, since the outbreak of 1962 War, numerous military incursions have taken place in the Himalayan regions of South Asia (Gupta 2015). The ongoing China's diplomacy and military aggressions over the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, Ladakh (Union territory of India) and in Nepal and Bhutan are reassertion of the Chinese strategic thinking over the Himalayas which started in the late 19th century and early 20th century. This paper examines China's Five Fingers strategy with Tibet being the palm and possibly how it is relevant for the (future) prospects of peace and security of India in particular and of South Asia in general.

The Chinese Aggressions on the Himalayan Regions of South Asia

In the past few years, China's encroachments in Nepal and Doklam standoff in 2017 between India and China, followed by the recent India-China military face-off in the eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim has reconfirmed China's expansionist policies in Asia and its strategic plan to increase its sphere of influence in the Himalayas and South Asia. These aggressive behaviors of China in the Himalayas pose a serious geostrategic ramification on India and its neighboring countries in the near future.

China's palm and the five-fingers strategy is a long-held strategic ambition of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) to cast its hegemony in the Himalayan regions of South Asia. However, despite being quoted and re-quoted in the numerous publications, the original documentation of alleged Mao's palm and the five-finger strategy hasn't been traced yet. But judging from the current China's strategic moves and military encroachments towards the Himalayan regions of South Asia, it reasserts the fundamental foundation of China's long-held strategic perception on Tibet. Therefore, there are numerous arguments in terms of its conceptualization and its proponent. The concept of China's palm and the five-finger strategy (hereafter referred as PFFS) and why it really matters in the context of China's expansionist policy towards the Himalayas is connected with the historical background of strategic triangle between India, Tibet and China.

The Geopolitical Importance of Tibet Between India and China

Before exploring China's palm and the five-fingers strategy, a historical approach towards the geopolitical importance of Tibet between India and China is a key to comprehend the Chinese strategic perception towards Tibet and the Himalayas. In the early 20th Century, when Asia is engulfed in the clouds of the Great Game, British Indian officers explored the geographical feasibility of Tibet as a buffer state. "The British approach to Tibet and China was based on twin calculations: to check Russian advances in the Himalayan area and to build trade links with China" (Kapur 2011, 83). The concept of a buffer state is an idea among strategists to balance the geopolitical relations without having physical geographic contact between two emerging adversary powers. "Two significant features of the buffer may be noted. One, the buffer is geographically interposed between the potential enemy and the area to be defended. Two, on land, as at sea, the region must in some sense, are a protectorate" (Parshotam 2007, 89).

British adopted the rampart strategy towards Tibet and the Himalayas by their plan of creating Tibet as an outer buffer and the Himalayan kingdom-states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as inner buffers for the prevention of any threats emanating from the Czarist Russia and China towards the Indian subcontinent. Subsequently, through the diplomatic negotiations, British India managed to convince Tibet to become its commercial passage in making trade deals with China. Through their calculated diplomatic negotiations, British India also successfully made Tibet as its buffer state. Hence, for many decades, it remained one of the most stable buffer states in Asia before the People's Liberation Army's invasion of Tibet in 1950s. Sir Charles Bell (the British Political Officer for Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. He was also known as British India's ambassador to Tibet) identified Tibet as an ideal buffer and he further elaborated:

> For we want Tibet as a buffer to India on the north. Tibet is ideal
> in this respect. With the large desolate area of the Northern Plains
> controlled by the Lhasa Government, central and southern Tibet
> governed by the same authority and the Himalayan border states
> guided by or in close alliance with the British Government. Tibet

forms a barrier equal, or superior, to anything the world can show elsewhere (Parshotam 2007, 90-91).

In 1947, before the departure of British from India, because of political differences between Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, India was partitioned into two nation- states where Pakistan was carved out of India as a newly independent state of South Asia. Hence, this geopolitical transition prompted the political tension between India and Pakistan. After three years of India's partition, the CCP started invading Tibet. The disappearance of Tibet as a buffer state led to the first ever military stand-off between India and China. In the meantime, India faced new security challenges from three fronts -- West Pakistan from north-west, East Pakistan from north-east and China from north and east.

The Indian nationalist leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan expressed the implication of China's invasion of Tibet towards India's national security in 1959: "This is so not only because Tibet is our frontier and what happens there affects our security, not only because of our spiritual and cultural bonds with Tibet" (DIIR, Indian Leaders on Tibet 1998, 22). By invading Tibet, the entire northern states of India posed a security threat from the Chinese military incursions. Once again, the geopolitical importance of Tibet plays a crucial role between India-China bilateral relations. In 1989 too, the geopolitical importance of Tibet between India and China was succinctly illustrated by the former defence minister of India, George Fernandes:

> Tibet's independents status in world history has a special relevance for India and her security. Its vast expanse of over 50,000 square miles which is a little less than half of India's 1,261,000 square miles, has been a perfect buffer between the three great Asian powers - China, India and Soviet Russia. Even if the nuclear bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles have given new meaning to the concept of buffer states, the very presence of Chinese ICBMs with nuclear warheads on the soil of Tibet is enough to prove that for India Tibet still remains crucial to its defence and security" (DIIR 1998, 79).

"Tibet is still and will always be a matter of grave concern to us. No

policy that allows the Chinese to be paramount in this once acknowledged buffer country, will ever be in the interest of India. However, misguided our Tibetan policy under the late Prime Minister may have been, however much we closed our eyes to the danger of Chinese expansionism in the interest of a non-existent Chini-Hindi brotherhood" (Mitter 1964, 5). In 1950s, India failed in its strategic calculations about China's policies toward India and conceded to China's demands of annulment of India's official representatives stationed in Lhasa and its trade missions. "Nehru acceded to the indirect but persistent Chinese demands in 1954, hoping that each state would respect the Himalayas as the operational perimeter of the other's political interest and defence" (Norbu 1997, 1078). Claude Arpi, a defence expert and author, reveals the failure of India's strategic thinking towards Tibet during 1950s in his article, where he writes: "At that time, the Indian government decided to ignore the Tibetan issue, probably due to a lack of vision and courage, despite the warnings of Sardar Patel and his colleagues. This move would have tremendous consequences; some that continue to be felt even 70 years later, for example, on the Northern borders of India, particularly in Eastern Ladakh" (Arpi 2020).

After China's military occupation of Tibet in 1950, Nehru understood that India at that time was not ready to face China; hence they decided to forego the strategic importance of Tibet in exchange for their perceived security from China. "Tibet lost its independence and India's serene northern frontier vanished. Even though at that time, India had some excellent strategic thinkers, the Government in Delhi decided not to use their competence; their conclusions and recommendations were not accepted by the then Prime Minister" (Arpi 2020). "Nehru rejected the value of Tibet as a buffer state and shifted his buffer diplomacy by building Indian treaty relations with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim" (Kapur 2011, 92).

After signing the Panchsheel Agreement between India and China in 1954, it sealed the fate of the Tibet question. China used the Panchsheel Agreement as legal card to prevent India's interference while China was invading Tibet during 1950-1959. "Delhi had made the biggest concession to China in modern Asian history, not only by giving up

India's extraterritorial rights in Tibet but, more importantly, by putting India's seal of legitimacy on the Chinese occupation of Tibet at a time when most nations were condemning it" (Norbu 2001, 285). Despite China's military intervention in Tibet, India remained neutral till 1959. The Indian nationalist leader, Acharya Kripalani forecasted the complexity of India-China relations after Tibet lost its independence during the Lok Sabha debate on 8 May 1959:

> So far as China's intentions are concerned, they are well known. Already she (China) has committed what is known as "cartographic aggression". Now Chou-En-Lai is reported to have come forward with a suggestion that undefined boundaries between China and other Asian countries should be settled by peaceful negotiations. Obviously, she does not recognize the McMahon Line, which forms the boundary line between India and Tibet. The seed of discord between the two countries have been sown and at any time the People's Government of China may direct its 'liberating' hordes to ransack Indian villages. Pandit Nehru has admitted that the Chinese have already occupied a few strategic Indian villages in the district of Almore. Pandit Nehru has so far taken no action (Acharya Kripalani 1998, 49).

After China's military crackdown of the Lhasa Uprising in 1959, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan people fled to India. The Indian government welcomed the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees as guests of India. Meanwhile, the government of India had also recognized the Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Therefore, the sensitivity and complexity of the Sino-Indian geopolitical relations had reached its heights between 1960 to1962. According to Bertil Lintner's book entitled *China's India War - Collision Course on the Roof of the World*, which has systematically chronicled the course of China's India war of 1962 and China's allegation of India's interference in the Tibetan politics: "At a meeting on 25 March 1959, only three weeks after the outbreak of the Lhasa uprising and as the Dalai Lama was on his way over the mountains to India, Deng Xiaoping, then a political as well as a military leader, made China's position clear: 'When the time comes, we certainly will settle accounts with them [the Indian]. The author also

brought Bruce Riedel's remark which quoted that Mao decided that he would have to take firm action against Nehru" (Lintner 2018, VX).

In 1962, for a short duration of time, China invaded Tawang in NEFA (North Eastern Frontier Agency) which comprise modern day Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Assam. China considered this as the two fingers of Tibet. Because of their strategic vulnerabilities in the time of conflicts with China, the Indian diplomats and political leaders realised Tibet's strategic importance to India and its national interests. Hence, after the 1962 War, India attempted to change its Tibet policy. Especially, during the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, India wanted to recognize the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, but this attempt was shelved after the uncertain death of Lal Bahadur Shastri. The successive Indian governments later adjusted its strategic position towards China. The establishment of Special Frontier Force (also known as 22 Establishment) in 1962 was one of the major outcomes of this strategic adjustment. "At any rate, after the 1962 war, Nehru's friendship policy towards China began to undergo some inevitable changes. The attack was viewed as the height of ingratitude to what India had done for China at Bandung and United Nations. A deep sense of betrayal pervaded the Indian attitude towards China. The modified policy which still seems operative might be called double-tracked. It maintains officially that Tibet is a part of China but clandestinely it aids the Dalai Lama and his Government-in-Exile to an extent that annoys China and hinders any prospects for improvement of the Sino-Indian Relations" (Norbu 2008, 373).

While on the other hand, after the complete invasion of Tibet, with frenzied infrastructure development in the form of construction of roads and bridges, Tibet was connected with major cities of China for the first time in its history. "Most of the economic assistance that China claims to have rendered Tibet has actually gone into strategic road building. This is not surprising when we keep in mind that China usually spends 10-11 per cent of its GDP on national defence and that next to the borders facing the Soviet Union, Tibet is probably one of the most strategic and vulnerable regions of the whole of China" (Norbu 2008, 375). From the 1960s-1970s, most of China's developmental expenditure in Tibet was spent mainly on the infrastructure development across

Tibet. Hence all these activities later aided CCP in militarizing the entire plateau of Tibet and particularly its bordering regions.

The Chinese strategists considered Tibet as a strategic passage to speed up China's expansionist policy towards the Himalayas and South Asia. The resurgent China under the CCP perceived Tibet as China's right-hand palm and Tibet's neighbouring regions are considered as its five-fingers. These five-fingers are Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Arpi lucidly points out what Tibet really means for resurgent China and Mao, "The truth is that Mao was only interested in the strategic assets of Tibet; China gained not only a huge landmass, but the access to the 'water tower of Asia', large mineral resources and a strategic position dominating the subcontinent. The Tibetan masses were nowhere in China's periscope" (Arpi 2020).

Because of their strategic significances, China developed massive military and building physical infrastructures across Tibet's border regions to further expand their sphere of influences in the Himalayas.

The Exploration of the Idea of Palm and the Five-finger Strategy

Imperial China viewed British invasion of Tibet in 1904 (Tsultrim 2016, 346) as a major security threat to China from its backyard. "The British, in fact, brought under their own orbit territories from Burma to Ladakh, along the Southern part of the Himalayas, including Bhutan and Nepal, which in the past used to be loyal tributaries in the Chinese Court. Russian influence that extended in the arc of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang, was also a source of concern for China, which increasingly realized the strategic importance of Tibet as its back door to Central and Southern Asia" (Carrai 2017, 9). The British invasion of Tibet in the year of 1904 and the ensuing Anglo-Tibet Convention created a strategic dilemma for China on China's perceived South-Western Frontier. This is seen by the Chinese strategists as a back door of China. "The Qing Court started then to assert through new policies, its sovereignty over Tibet. In order to strengthen its administrative control over the territory, it sent to Tibet, officers ZhangYintang and LianYu, and later, in 1908, the successful mission of Zhao Erfeng(He was being

as the last amban in Tibet). The discourse of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, was expressed in official texts with the words *zhuquan (sovereignty)* and *zhuguo(host country)*, and it opposed the British discourse of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet (expressed in Chinese official texts with the terms *zongzhuquan (suzerainty)*" (Carrai 2017, 9). But China's control over Tibet is nullified by Lord Curzon, Governor-General of British India, the architect of British policy towards Tibet from 1899 to 1905.

He explicitly declared that "Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is a fiction, a political affectation; if we do nothing in Tibet, we shall have Russia trying to establish a protectorate in less than ten years. This might not constitute a military danger, at any rate for some time, but would be a political danger. The effect on Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan would constitute a positive danger; we can, and stop a Russian protectorate over Tibet, by being in advances ourselves" (Grunfeld 1987, 50). In this context, Tibet was seen as a region of geostrategic importance between British India, Imperial China and Czarist Russia. These three great Asian powers contested for gaining their pivot in Tibet to secure their own frontiers. To check British influence in Tibet, Chinese officials used different strategic maneuvers to bring Tibet and its neighboring countries under its own political orbit. For instance, the Qing Commissioner in Lhasa (Amban), Zhang Yin-tang expressed that "China, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim might be compared to the five colors, viz. yellow, red, blue, black, and green. A skillful painter may so arrange the colors as to produce several beautiful design or effects" (Addy 1984) This irredentist statement attributed to Qing dynasty shows its desire to conquest Tibet and its neighboring Himalayan Kingdom-states.

During the reign of Empress Dowager Cixi, Tibet was considered as an important backdoor that needs to be secured. Prof. Dawa Norbu's analysis further pointed that Tibet was considered by China as the back door and the lips of the mouth, which needs to be secured. This Chinese strategic pivot was triggered by British invasion of Tibet in 1904. Norbu elucidated this notion in his research paper:"We would note here that the idea as a backdoor to China was first conceived by the East India Company" (Norbu 2018, 64).

Premen Addy further emphasized in his book entitled, *Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard: The Making of British Policy towards Lhasa, 1889-1925,* "As, moreover, Lhasa is the capital of all Tibet, the home of the cult of Lamaism, the abode of the Imperial Resident, the seat of numberless Buddhist shrines, the rendezvous of all the tribes, it has long been coveted by the British. Tibet, again, is the door that shut off Yunnan and Sichuan, and should we prove remiss, the teeth will feel cold when the lips have gone. Any disturbance of her present status would bequeath to us a legacy of deep-seated injury" (Addy 1984, 156). With this reference, using different expressions of strategic language for transforming the perception into realpolitik is one of the salient features of the Chinese strategic culture. Mao Zedong himself was a firm believer of Sun Tzu's strategic doctrine. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, subsequently, both successors, the Chinese governments of Republic of China and the People's Republic of China too started following the Qing Court frontier policy towards Tibet and the Himalayas.

The CCP strategized Tibet as the palm of China to expand its sphere of influence in the Himalayan regions of South Asia. Srikant Dutt has covered on this context in his researched article entitled, *Propaganda Where India and China Meet*, in which he examined that: "the context in which these concepts have operate since the late 19th century has been the struggle for predominance by bordering powers over the buffer states and regions of the Himalayas: Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and, sometimes, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. This struggle saw the protection and their inclusion within the British colonial sphere of influence. This position was inherited by independence India after 1947, but was followed shortly after by the reassertion of Chinese rights in Tibet after 1950" (Dutt 1980, 8).

In Tibetan translation of Mao's selected works, volume two, Mao Zedong wrote in December 1939: "The imperialists had stolen many of China's territories" (Zedong 1978, 434). To link with this ultra-nationalistic statement, Mao listed Bhutan and Nepal as stolen territories of China. Dutt further stated that "what Mao wrote that Bhutan and Nepal had been formerly under China's protection and had been progressively 'stripped away' by Britain" (Dutt 1980, 10). Beijing had also described

parts of Nepal as Chinese territories on several maps which it had published (Bondurant 1958, 146).

An unpublished Ph.D. thesis tilted, The Foreign Relations of India with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal between 1947-1967: Analytical Framework for the Study of Big Power-Small Power Relations, submitted by Valentine J. Belfiglio in 1970 reveals that, "Chinese communist officials in Tibet in 1954 stated that they would liberate Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh, and the NEFA, which were wrongfully being held by the Indian imperialists." In the same year, "the Chinese government published a book called, A Brief History of Modern China, for school students, which included a map showing the territories allegedly taken by "imperialist powers" between 1840 and 1919, terming them as "portions of China that must be reclaimed." This map included Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and the entire Northeast India" (Grover 1974, 152-153).

The strategic significance of Tibet as a back-door of China and lips of mouth was China's strategic plan for securing its back-door and later maneuvering its expansionist policy towards Tibet and the Himalayas. Similarly, Mao's strategic blueprint of China's palm and the five-finger strategy to occupy Tibet and the Himalayas were just like an old wine in a new labeled bottle. The present Chinese president Xi Jinping has implemented Mao's strategic plan for securing Chinese territorial integrity and expanding China's hegemony towards the Himalayan regions of South Asia.

China's Military Intrusions in the Himalayas

With the invasion of Tibet, China has started the process of its "five-fingers" strategy in the Himalayan regions. The position of Tibet and its significances have been recognised after China's publication of a new map in 1961 which depicted "Peking's version of the border along the entire Himalayan frontier. While the map was primarily intended to support Chinese territorial claims against India, it also contained several minor divergences from previous Chinese maps concerning the border with Bhutan. Considerable publicity in both the Indian and Western press was given at this time to alleged Chinese historical claims to the Himalayan border states of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal" (Rose 1977, 76).

According to Professor Ashok Kapur, it was India's strategic miscalculation in the 1950s for not taking any concrete position against China's invasion of Tibet, which later provided enough confidence to Chinese communist leaders to continue their expansionist policy towards South Asia's Himalayan regions and states. Kapur argues that "for China, the mythology of historical friendship and the importance of anti-imperialism was deceitful but diplomatically useful. For India it amounted to self-deception. In hindsight the peaceful mask provided China with the time to execute its geo-political strategy in the Himalayan area - first in relation to Tibet and then vis-a-vis India in the late 1950s. Even if I argue that the 1962 Sino-Indian War as not inevitable because of attempts by China's premier Zhou Enlai to promote a negotiated border settlement, Nehru's failure to understand that Mao's aim to liberate Tibet and the 'five-fingers' of the Himalayan Kingdoms created a geo-political or strategic conflict of interest" (Kapur 2011, 92). But, "Prime Minister Nehru specifically declared in 1959 that an attack on Nepal or Bhutan would be interpreted as an attack on Indian territory, thus extending the Indian security system to the entire sub-Himalayan region" (Rose 1977, 76).

The 2017 Doklam stand-off between India and China on the Doklam Plateau, China-India violent face-off in June 2020 on eastern Ladakh and its recent occupation of Nepal's village called Rui Gaun of Gorkha district are just tip of the iceberg of China's planned military aggressions in the five-fingers Himalayan regions. "A report prepared by the Survey Department of Nepal's Agriculture Ministry lists 10 places consisting of 33 hectares of Nepalese land wherein China has diverted the river and claimed the area as a natural boundary" (Wani 2020). China is actively encroaching in the Himalayan borders of Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh for further encircling India to boost "China's Strategy of Encirclement," which aims to encircle India through different fronts to undermine India's *sui generis* position in South Asia. Implementing China's PFFS in the form of military encroachment and developmental diplomacy in the Himalayas will perturb the future security and stability of South Asia.

Conclusion

Since the invasion of Tibet and its subsequent disappearance as a traditional buffer state between India and China in 1950s, the two Asian giants faced each other for the first time in the history along the Indo-Tibetan border. The forceful changing of the guard belonging to the Tibetan government to the resurgent China led to the conversion of Indo-Tibetan border into Sino-Indian border. This has created an unprecedented and enduring geopolitical tension in the Himalayas. Geographically as well as strategically, the mountainous regions of Tibet are the first line of defense for India. They ultimately safeguarded the 3,488 kilometer long border from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

The present Chinese leadership has considered Tibet issue as a core of China's national interest. During the 6th and 7th Tibet Work Forum, Xi Jinping re-emphasized the geopolitical importance of Tibet for securing the Chinese national security and unification. Xi Jinping's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era puts forward the 10 "Musts", in the second must, Xi says: "We must adhere to the strategic thinking of governing the country and governing the border, and stabilizing Tibet first." The Tibet Work Forum meeting is the highest decision-making body which deals with Tibet affairs. The current Chinese strategy of "stabilizing Tibet first" is the updated stratagem of Mao's strategy of China's palm and the five-fingers and Chinese nationalists' perception of Tibet as a backdoor of China in the early 20th century.

These Himalayan five-fingers which China has claimed are closely attached to India. Excluding Nepal and Bhutan, remaining three fingers are currently under the jurisdiction of Indian political administration. Moreover, Bhutan has no diplomatic relations with China. Currently, Nepal is moving closer towards China. Therefore, geopolitically, any Chinese aggression across the Himalayas is not in the interest of India's national security.

Professor Dawa Norbu noted that up to 1947, there was only 75 border police who safeguarded the Indo-Tibet border which stretches from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. Today, China has deployed nearly 50,000 soldiers to the Indo-Tibet border areas. At the same time, India is likely

to add another 35,000 Indian troops on its borders. Along with these massive military deployments in the Himalayas, heavy and light combats weapons are also deployed in the high-altitude areas of the Indo-Tibet border. Both India and China are incurring heavy military expenditures safeguarding the world's highest international border. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Organization's (SIPRO) report, India's military expenditure is $71.1 billion in 2019 which ranked India as the third highest military spender in the world after the U.S. and China. Tsewang Rinzin, a Ph.D. research scholar at the Columbia University, statistically shows through empirical findings that how much Indian public tax-payer annually contribute to India's defense expenditure. His calculation is: "The fact that India has a shared border with China due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet and subsequent signing of the Panchsheel Agreement cost Indian tax-payer about US$ 7.16 billion annually, on average. This amount is little over 10% of India's total military spending in 2019, i.e., US$ 71.1 billion. Adding up this cost from 1955 (the year after Panchsheel agreement) to 2019 without any adjustment to inflation and exchange rate fluctuation, for 64 years, the occupation of Tibet by China cost the Indian government US$ 462.8 billion" (Rinzin 2020).

With this high military cost over the management of borders with Tibet, the centrality of Tibet in terms of demilitarization of the Tibetan Plateau is an ultimate resolution for resolving the enduring dispute over the Indo-Tibet border. The Indian national leader, George Fernandes rightly justified the significance of the making Tibet a zone of peace between India and China: "If Tibet becomes a zone of peace, free from Chinese troops and nuclear weapons, there will be no reason for India to maintain a large army on the Himalayan heights. This would immediately enable both India and China to reduce their military expenditure and use the money thus saved for economic development. The countries of Europe are reducing their troop, and in the process, their military expenditure. Why should not India and China follow a similar course?" (DIIR, Indian leaders on Tibet 1998, 81).The renowned international scholars on Tibet and China such as Professor Mohan Malik, Professor Dawa Norbu and strategist Brahma Chellaney argue that Tibet lies at the heart of the Sino-Indian relations.

For making of Tibet a zone of peace, the centuries old status of Tibet as a zone of peace has to be restored between India and China. The idea of making Tibet a zone of peace was initially proposed by the His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in 1980s. This proposal is a win-win solution for the interests of Tibet, India and China.

In 1975, Nepal king Birendra proposed making Nepal a peace zone between two Asian giants. It was formally declared by the Prime Minister of Nepal, S.B. Thapa in 1982. China supported this initiative. Therefore, if India and China are mutually looking forward to bringing peace and stability in Asia, making Tibet as a zone of peace is the ultimate solution for maintaining friendship and creating peaceful co-existence between India and China.

In fact, whether it's Qing Court or the Chinese Communist Party, China's strategic perception towards Tibet and the Himalayas remained intact, but India has the potential to bring China on the negotiation table for making Tibet a zone of peace for securing India's own northern borders and to check China's strategic encirclement of India with the reference to the *Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People*, which is drafted by the Central Tibetan Administration. Because China's strategic perception of Tibet being the China's palm and Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh as the five-fingers of Tibet is still in play in the Himalayas.

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Recentring the Margins: Analysing the Contributions of Exiled Tibetans to Indian Politics, Culture, Education, Economy and Security

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Abstract

There is no argument that India has been hospitable and very generous to exiled Tibetans. India warmly welcomed Tibetan refugees and allowed them to establish institutions, settlements, and monasteries. Tibetans and non-Tibetan scholars mutually agree on the generous contributions that India made for Tibet and to the Tibetan struggle. Recently, some Indian scholars began to raise question on Tibetans of jeopardizing the national security and becoming a burden on India. It is, thus a crucial time to discuss the significance of Tibetans and their contributions to India. For the last six decades, Tibetans have offered the cultural soft power of Buddhism and military service in the Special Frontier Force (SFF) for India. And by corollary, the economic and educational input of Tibetans to various local developments also cannot be ignored.

Keywords: Tibet, India, China, Security, Culture, Education, Military

Introduction

In October 1949, the Chinese communist military force defeated the Kuomintang Nationalist Army and founded the People's Republic of China (PRC). Chairman Mao ordered the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to march toward Tibet in the name of liberation of Tibet. The PLA had no hesitation in deploying both military force and financial inducements to invade Tibetan lands, beginning in Kham and Amdo, two traditional regions of Tibet. Jawaharlal Nehru, in the beginning vociferously protested against China's invasion, but China, by force managed to sign the 17-Point Agreement in 1951. Subsequently, the PLA arrived in Lhasa with very little resistance, setting up the Tibetan

Liberation Committee along with the Tibetan government in Lhasa. Dawa Norbu, a well-known professor of Central Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, summarised, "there was virtually nothing, he [Nehru] and Panikkar concluded that India could do militarily to dislodge the PLA from Tibet"(Norbu 2001, 284). India, thus decided to become a friend of China.

While visiting India on the invitation of the Mahabodhi Society of India to attend the 2500th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Lord Buddha in 1956, the Dalai Lama managed to meet international dignitaries to seek political support for Tibet. But it was too late to reverse the fate of Tibet. The young Dalai Lama went back to Tibet unhappily and tried to negotiate with China for the next three years. However, the differences between Tibet and China in Lhasa had already deteriorated and it became clear to both sides that this uneasy co-existence would collapse at any time.

Suspicious movements of Chinese leaders in Lhasa scared the Tibetan public into thinking that the Dalai Lama might get harmed or kidnapped, which caused a Tibetan mass uprising in 1959. The Dalai Lama and his entourage escaped to the southern border of Tibet and then eventually crossed into India on 30 March, 1959(Goldstein 2003, 223). Soon after sixty thousand Tibetans escaped into India, passing through the borders of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, and the total number has grown each year (རྒྱལ་བ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། 1963, 225). Although India signed neither the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, they not only welcomed Tibetans but provided them with basic needs.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime-Minister of India and the Dalai Lama realised that this struggle would not be solved easily. Thus, a Tibetan Government-in-Exile was set up in Mussoorie, later moved to Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, and the Tibetan refugees were encouraged and facilitated to establish settlements, monasteries, and schools. Tibetans gradually rebuilt their lives on this foreign soil whilst keeping their common mission of the struggle for freedom alive.

Theoretical and Legal Background

Although the label of 'refugee' in the context of Tibetans in India, Nepal and Bhutan is incongruent between theoretical assumptions and legal definition. The recent broad study of Tibetan refugees from different academic disciplines have generally improved the understanding of Tibetans in diaspora. There is, nevertheless, no singular theoretical framework in which the topic of this article could be analysed. By embracing an approach based around a 'label' has arguably come of age as a legitimate and interdisciplinary field of enquiry will help to comprehend the complexity of the status of Tibetans in India. The contributions on refugee studies from scholars (Kunz 1981,42-53, Zolberg et al. 1989, Richmond 1993,7-24, Marx 1990, 189-203, Hein 1993,43-59) among others, offered multiple theoretical approaches to deal with various refugees around the world. It is still hard to analyse Tibetan refugee cases in any of these general theoretical approaches. Richard Black, an expert on refugee studies, argued, " the search for theoretical be better achieved by situating studies of particular refugee (and other forced migrant) groups in the theories of cognate areas (and major disciplines)"(Black 2001, 66). This perfectly makes sense for Tibetan refugee studies in India.

The theories on refugee studies based on fields such as typology, political transnationalism, colonialism and statelessness play a fair role in this article. But the case studies of refugees and their impact on host countries such as the works of Goda Dirzauskaite(2015) and Christina Boswell (2002) reflect more resemblance for analysing particular situations. In addition, the monumental work of Richard Black, *Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: From Theory to Policy* eased to situate the case of Tibetan refugees within the broad understanding of refugee studies. This article, thus, deploys multi-theoretical and case studies to understand the contribution of Tibetan refugees in India.

The 1951 Geneva Convention and its amendment protocol in 1969 under the initiative of the United Nations (UN) singled out regional legal positions of particular countries such as India to deal with refugees. The vulnerable legal status of refugees in India bars most of the Tibetan refugees from becoming naturalised Indian citizens even after

60 years in exile. The situation, however, promoted the distinctiveness of Tibetan refugees as a community and consistently encouraged them to be productive and be grateful to the host country. Knowing these theoretical and legal complexities will help to see the comprehensive picture of the various contributions that Tibetan refugees in India are making for the host country, which I will discuss through several major categories.

Strengthening India's Strategic Position

The Central Tibetan government in Lhasa requested British India to initiate a border treaty between Tibet and China. British India subsequently invited both Tibetan and Chinese delegates to Shimla to sign a mutually agreed treaty. Taking the opportunity, British India demanded the Tibetan representatives to sign a separate treaty that includes the McMahon Line, to demarcate the border between Tibet and British India. Shatra Paljor Dorje, the chief representative of Tibetan delegates said: "Now Tibetan independence is about to reconfirm, thus, British officials told us, it is indispensable to have a new treaty between Tibet and the British"(དཔལ་འབྱོར་རྡོ་རྗེ། 2014, 60). Thus, the McMahon Line, a new border treaty between Tibet and British India, was signed in March 1914.

However, Ivan Chen, the head of Chinese representatives, refused to sign the main Shimla treaty in July 1914, after fifteen months of back-and-forth dialogue. The Tibetan and British Indian delegates signed the treaty as a bilateral accord and attached an additional note denying China having any privileges under the agreement. British India knew that according to international law, the McMahon Line is not legitimate if China has sovereignty over Tibet.

Thus, Article 2 of the Shimla convention says: The Governments of Great Britain and China recognizing that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China, and recognizing also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet [including the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama], which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government at Lhasa"(Tibetan Justice Centre. 2014).

However, this famous McMahon Line was almost lost from the political discourse for decades, but it reappeared in the 1930s for various political reasons (Gupta 1971, 530-540). In 1947, India became an independent country, and the McMahon Line suddenly became the backbone of their official claim of eastern Indo-Tibetan border. The 1,129km distance of the eastern border between India and Tibet, thus, solely depends on the McMahon Line.

India signed the Panchsheel Agreement with China on 29 April, 1954, and it officially recognised Tibet as an integral part of China, without pragmatically calculating the consequences that it would risk the whole Himalayan border. Nehru expected that China would "honour India's claim over the Indo-Tibetan border as well as India's special relationships with the Himalayan states"(Norbu 2001, 285). On the contrary, China began to argue with India that "Tibet could not have had the authority to sign treaties [The McMahon Line and Ladakh-Tibet Treaty] creating international borders if Tibet is a part of China"(Thokmay 2020).

As Rajiv Sikri, a former secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs for India, said, "for thousands of years, Tibet was the buffer that kept India and China geographically apart and therefore at peace"(Sikri 2011,55). Delhi, then recalibrated their policy and began to deploy the support of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leaders to legitimise their claims on the Himalayan borders. We will discuss this later. The two other locations of India and Tibet border, the Central sector, located in Sikkim region, has a distance of 220km and the Western sector, located in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, shares a 2,707km of the border with Tibet (China).

Regarding the Central sector, Tibet and Sikkim shared a traditional border for centuries without any conflict, which was forcibly changed under the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890. A new border was created in 1895 by the Qing Empire and British India, neither of them having sovereignty over Tibet and Sikkim at the time. British India later persuaded Tibet and the kingdom of Sikkim to accept the new border and the newly independent India also decided to follow British footsteps, which expanded the territory of India.

When discussing the Western sector, it is essential to recall Ladakh-Tibet border history. In 1684, after the Ladakh-Tibet war over territory, the two sides signed the first *Temisgang* treaty to demarcate their border (བཀྲ་ ཤིས་རབ་རྒྱས། 1984, 251-253). Two centuries later, Dogra general Zorawar Singh Kahluria took over Ladakh and launched further expeditions into Tibet. Tibetan military forces, with the help of the Qing army, killed Zorawar Singh and defeated the Dogra army and signed a new treaty of Chushul in 1842 maintaining the *status quo ante Bellum* (དགོན་མཆོག་བསོད་ ནམས། 1980, 96-98). The present border between India and Tibet in the Western sector was initially drafted on the basis of these two historic treaties signed between Ladakh and Tibet. Therefore, without solving the Tibet question, it is impossible to discuss the border between India and China. Tibet and Tibetan history play a vital role in the diplomacy of border disputes between India and China.

After the Chinese PLA defeated the ill-prepared Indian force in a border war in September 1962. Nehru and his cabinet suddenly woke up from the misplaced dream of *'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai'* and came to face the reality of betrayal from the Chinese side. "India took a long time to recover from the blow to its self-respect"(Mukherjee and Mukherjee 2008, 209) and found itself stuck after committing a strategic blunder by recognizing China's sovereignty over Tibet during the Panchsheel Agreement. The agreement has both legally and strategically, compromised the credibility of McMahon Line and Ladakh-Tibet border treaties.

For instance, China's claim over Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh is simple. If Tibet is an integral part of China as the Panchsheel Agreement says, then Tawang is part of China because Tawang is historically part of Tibet and Tibet has no power to sign a border treaty with India. Lian Xiangmin, director of contemporary research of the Beijing-based China Tibetology Research Centre argues, "Tawang is a part of Tibet and Tibet is a part of China. So Tawang is a part of China. There is not much problem here"(The Economic Times 2017). In this political dilemma, India turned to Tibetan refugees to support India's border position and make the moral and legal case for border consolidation. The Tibetan Government-in-Exile officially endorsed India's position on the Sino-Indian border in the 1970s, which was, since then, reaffirmed

several times (Shaw 2020). Tibetan political leaders, including the Dalai Lama, firmly stood on the Indian side and declared statements to reaffirm India's position on the Sino-Indian border. Dr Lobsang Sangay, President of Tibetan Government-in-Exile recently said, "Lhasa had always maintained that the disputed parts of Ladakh were always part of India as are parts like Tawang in the state of Arunachal Pradesh" (Shaw 2020). Deploying Tibetan voices to maintain strategic balance against China's historical claim over India-China border issue is very significant for India. At the same time, securing the loyalty of the Himalayan people toward India is also incredibly essential for long-term strategy. For achieving these two interests, Tibetan religious leaders such as the Dalai Lama's contribution for India's strategic interest.

For instance, the Dalai Lama made six visits to Arunachal Pradesh between March 1983 and November 2009 (Ministry of External Affairs 2017). For each time, he restated Tibet's unwavering support on India's border stand when questioned by the media. At the same time, he enthusiastically propagated the greatness of India among his millions of followers in the Himalayan region. Gyalwang Karmapa, the third most influential Lama in Tibet, made visits to Arunachal and Ladakh also made similar statements in favour of India.

Knowing the influence, China strongly criticised India in April 2017: "We demand the Indian side [to] immediately stop its actions using the Dalai Lama to undermine China's interests"(PTI 2017). China also said, "He [The Dalai Lama] is not just a religious figure. Therefore, his visit to the place will not be purely of religious purpose"(PTI 2017). In the same way, on numerous occasions, the Dalai Lama visited various places in Ladakh and praised the glories of India in terms of its cultural civilisation and political democracy. Tibetan Lamas and political leaders follow the examples of the Dalai Lama and occasionally highlight the significance of India among their followers. Tibetan spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama also became strong influence to maintain peace and harmony between Buddhists and Muslims in the Ladakh region (Dalai Lama 2018), between Tibetans and local Monpas in Arunachal Pradesh, and other Himalayan communities who have disputes among them. In 2018, after decades of conflict, Buddhists and Muslims finally

signed peace pledge in Zangskar, Ladakh under the guidance of the Dalai Lama. Gulam, the head of the Muslim Action Committee who led the delegation for Muslims, told The Sunday Guardian, "We owe it completely to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama's vision and compassion for enabling us to reach this milestone. We remain forever indebted" (The Sunday Guardian 2018).

Reviving the Buddhist Culture and Heritage

India is the original home of some of the most major religious traditions in the world, such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Buddhism was born as a movement against the dogmatism of an old tradition. Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Bhutan and Tibet through scholars, missionaries, merchants and rulers (Sen 2015, 450-461) and embraced the local traditions to make itself more diverse and inclusive.

Beginning in the 11th century, Buddhism in India had repeatedly been attacked: five major Buddhist monasteries such as Vikramashila, Nalanda, Somapura, Odantapura, and Jagaddala were plundered and burned down into ashes and thousands of Buddhist scholars were massacred whilst destruction on Buddhism was occurring in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Khotan, currently known as East Turkestan (Xinjiang), and other places(དགེ་འདུན་ཆོས་འཕེལ། 1994, 372). India was the home to Buddhism for over a thousand years, but gradually disappeared from India following the invasion of Muslim and Hindu rulers and it never was able to revive fully afterwards. Apart from Tibetan Buddhist communities, several smaller congregations of Indian Buddhists are clustered in India, but they could not restore the large-scale tradition of Buddhist philosophical studies and vibrant monastic system.

In Tibet, for over a thousand years, Tibetans have not just continued, but highly developed the in-depth studies of Buddhism through monastic communities. The Dalai Lama said: "Tibetans have only pursued the study of Buddhist logic and philosophy, and we always use a logical approach in our pursuit" (Dalai Lama 2019). Buddhism in Tibet then began to spread back to Himalayan regions, currently known as Ladakh,

Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, where Buddhism became their religion. P.K. Gautam, an expert at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis in New Delhi, argued, "the Indian state and citizens need to be made aware of these characteristics to nurture Buddhism in the Himalayan belt and beyond in Tibet"(Gautam 2008,61-74).

In 1959, thousands of Tibetan monks, nuns and lay practitioners were forced to escape to India, and they founded the Buxa Duar monastic community with 1,500 monks and nuns in West Bengal (Grimes 1960). Since the last Buddhist monasteries, in the northern part of India were destroyed in the early 12th century, it was for the first time that such a scholastic and massive Buddhist community reappeared on Indian soil. Gradually, large monasteries such as Drepung, Ganden, Sera and Namdroling were established respectively in the Karnataka state in the 1960s, followed by many smaller monasteries, nunneries and Buddhist study centres in different parts of India. Today, there are about 300 Tibetan monasteries and nunneries with over 35,000 monks and nuns, excluding the traditional Buddhist monasteries in the Himalayan regions, studying and practising Buddhism (Central Tibetan Administration-A 2020). Buddhism, once again, began to flourish along with other religions of India and brought more diversity to the Indian culture. The Himalayan region is home to more than four million Buddhists, and 1.5 million Buddhist followers are living in the Indian Himalayan regions (Apollo 2017, 147-157). However, before Tibetans came to India, there were no major Buddhist study centres in India and Buddhist followers from the Himalayas had to go to Tibet for higher Buddhist studies. The journey was arduous and very dangerous. Thus, Indian Himalayan Buddhist communities were able to produce very few Buddhist scholars for more than seven centuries. Since Tibetan refugees escaped from Tibet to India and founded the major Buddhist study centres, the history of Himalayan Buddhist scholarship has changed forever.

Ven Thupten Palden, an expert on Ladakh and Himalayan Buddhist history and author of several books on Ladakh said: "Over the course of seven hundred years, Ladakh Buddhist monasteries were able to produce only 15 to 20 Buddhist *Geshes* [scholars], but since Tibet lost independence and they founded major Buddhist monasteries in South

India, and Ladakhi monks got the opportunity to study there. We [Ladakh] produced more than 150 Ladakhi Buddhist *Geshes* for just sixty years"(Thupten 2020).

For instance, Ridzong Thupten Nyima Lungtok Tenzin Norbu, a son of the local ruler in Ladakh, made history to become the 102nd Ganden Tripa, one of the highest Buddhist scholarship positions in Tibetan Buddhism (Berzin 2010). Jigme Yeshe Lama, an Assistant Professor at the University of Calcutta, on the other hand, argued, the most critical contribution that Tibetan refugees made for India is the revival of *Vajrayana* Buddhism in its original land (Lama 2020).

Apart from the Buddhist teachings, Tibetan spiritual leaders such as Karmapa, Sakya Gongma, Drikung Chetsang and Drukchen Rinpoche among others, provided both financial and religious guidance for rebuilding ruined monasteries, temples and sacred places throughout the Himalayan regions. They also promoted in-depth studies of Buddhist scholarship among the Himalayan Buddhists to improve their knowledge of Buddhism and inspired people to dismiss the blind faith. Thousands of Himalayan monks and nuns were taught and trained in the Tibetan religious institutes in India and then they return to their Himalayan home to teach fellow monks, nuns and laypeople there. They are always encouraged to be a "21st century Buddhist", it means to be a Buddhist who follows wisdom, not blind faith, the term which is coined by the Dalai Lama (Puri 2012). One may argue that Tibetan refugees reinvigorated Himalayan Buddhism and its future.

Although India is the original birthplace of Buddhism, numerous Buddhist places and temples were destroyed and then forgotten until the 20th century. Gedun Choephel, an early 20th century Tibetan scholar and the author of the *Guide Book of the Buddhist Sacred Places in India*, observed, "Except Bodhgaya, people in India even don't know the names where the other sacred Buddhist sites are located ..…….. In the 1880s, the location of this [Sarnath temple] has been used as a big farm, without the knowledge that this is the place where Buddha has turned his Dharma wheel"(དགེ་ འདུན་ཆོས་འཕེལ། 1994, 353). Even in the early 20th century, apart from the archaeological research and heritage preservation purpose, Buddhism did

not have any religious significance to most Indians and didn't received any major patronage among the Indian people.

Myanmar rulers and Sri Lankan Buddhists began to restore main Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gaya and Sarnath respectively in the 19th century, but many other sacred places were not known to many Tibetan scholars such as Gedun Choephel and Lodru Gyatso (ཀློ་གྲོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 1994, 2), among others thus discovered the forgotten sacred places in India and made them popular. Gradually these newly discovered Buddhist sacred places attracted millions of Buddhist followers, which made it possible to restore the sites. Subsequently, many of these sacred places are now registered under the protection of UNESCO World Heritage.

Today, these sacred Buddhist places receive millions of religious tourists and adventurers and bring immense contribution to the social and economic landscape to the local communities (Jerryson 2016). Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, the current Minister of India for Tourism and Culture, said, "Buddhist tourism is one of the focus areas of this government which has already been kicked off with re-opening of Nalanda University"(Naik 2014, 5).

Thousands of Buddhist tourists also come to India to visit Tibetan religious institutes and receive teachings from the Tibetan masters. Tens of thousands of Buddhists from all over the world come to India whenever the Dalai Lama gives teachings and transmissions such as Kalachakra empowerment. Buddhist tourism offers not only political and cultural benefits, but it also brings economic gain to many sectors in different regions in India.

Promoting India's Buddhist Soft Power

In May 1956, Nehru's government initiated the 2500th Buddha Jayanti and provided rent-free lands for Buddhist associations to rebuild their temples. Recently, in Bihar, the government has established modern Nalanda University, which is designed to become one of the best Buddhist study centres in the world. Michael Jerryson argued that India initiated all these efforts because it wants to deploy Buddhism as a cultural resource for the foreign diplomatic benefit and India's soft power (Jerryson 2016, 54).

However, many Indians still feel like they do not have much authority and legitimacy over Buddhism because the scholarship and practice of Buddhism among Indians are very minimal. The major Buddhist institutes and Buddhist ritual practices in India have largely been administered by non-Indian Buddhists and more significantly India does not have a prominent recognizable Indian Buddhist leader. In this circumstance, the repeated endorsements of the prominent Tibetan Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa to describe India as "motherland of Buddhism" and the home of "the Seventeen Buddhist Pandits"(Blumenthal 2012) help India to legitimise their claim as a leading Buddhist country. On 1 January, 2015, at Surat city airport in India, the Dalai Lama speaking to News reporters, he said: "My mind is filled with Nalanda [an ancient Buddhist Monastery] thoughts. That is an ancient Indian institute. So, I consider you Indians as my Guru traditionally, historically"(Press Trust of India 2015). The Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, repeatedly promotes these kinds of messages, not only in India but throughout the world. Hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist masters thus carry similar words to 'promote and propagate' Indian culture across the globe (Thokmay 2019).

Speaking of soft power as described by Professor Joseph Nye, who coined the term, Buddhism became one of the most vital resources to enhance India's soft power and diplomacy. The Indian government, thus, repeatedly highlights Buddhism in their foreign policy. On 4 May 2015, speaking on the occasion of Buddha *Poornima* (the birth and death anniversary of Gautam Buddha), Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India said:

> The world has acknowledged that the 21st century will be Asia's century. While there could be differences of opinion on which country in Asia would emerge as the leader, it had been accepted that the century would belong to Asia. However, if the message of Buddha is not followed, this fate would not be achieved. By following Buddha's teachings of love and compassion [karuna], Asia could become an inspiration and guiding spirit for the world (Chauhan 2015).

Arijit Mazumdar, a well-known expert on Indian politics, argued, "Modi's recent push on Buddhism is seen as an essential step to address the years of neglect of Buddhism and strengthened India's case for the leadership of Buddhist Asia"(Mazumdar 2018, 470). Indeed, India began to deploy Buddhism for state strategic diplomacy and cultural pride as early as in the 1950s. Recently, Modi emphasised, "without Buddha, this century cannot be Asia's century"(Pethiyagoda 2015) and declared India's official projects to promote Buddhism. Despite all these efforts, India still desperately need the endorsement of Buddhist leaders to legitimise their leadership in the Buddhist world. Discussing India's Buddhist promotion, Jigme Yeshe Lama argued, "More importantly, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is a torchbearer for the propagation of this Indian philosophy which is dubbed by him as the 'Nalanda school'"(Lama 2020).

In the same way, China also views Buddhism as a vital resource to resolve domestic problems and add soft power to its foreign relations with other Buddhist countries. China has established the Nanhai Buddhist Academy in Hainan Province, which is equivalent to the Nalanda University in India. They officially initiated to organise the World Buddhist Forum (WBF), once every three years and invited Buddhist scholars from across the world. China also campaigns for the prestige of Gyaltsen Norbu, the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, illegitimately selected by PRC to challenge the Dalai Lama. Besides, China also proudly declared that they have the largest number of Buddhist followers in the world.

China decided to fund a big archaeological initiative to excavate buried Buddhist sites in Bangladesh such as Nateshwar, the birthplace of famous Bengali Buddhist scholar Atisha. The Chinese Cultural Department helped to build the Lotus Sutra tower in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Nepal was offered \$3 billion by Beijing for the Lumbini project, designed to expand the birthplace of Buddha into the premier place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from around the world (Rinzin 2018). China plans to undermine the legitimacy of India as a leading country in the Buddhist world and dominate Buddhist soft power. China also purposely instituted policies to popularise Buddhist places in Nepal and Bangladesh as a counter challenge to Buddhist places in India.

Without Tibetan Buddhist communities, India has less than 1% of the Buddhist population of the world and will never be able to revive the lost tradition of in-depth Buddhist studies. India obviously cannot offer huge funds, like China does, to build Buddhist influence in other countries. But, as Isabelle Shi argued, India has the Dalai Lama, which is "China's greatest weakness in the arena of Buddhist soft power. It cannot cultivate a benign, peaceful Buddhist image greater than that of the 14th Dalai Lama, who is today known worldwide as one of the most iconic and popular spiritual leaders"(Shi 2019). India also accommodates major Tibetan Buddhist institutes which have become the most prominent centres for Buddhist studies in the world. On his state visit to Mongolia, Modi was praised for India's relaxed visa policy for hundreds of Mongolians who came to India to study at various Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Since Tibetan refugees have established Buddhist institutes in India, thousands of Buddhists from Nepal and Bhutan began to join the Tibetan monasteries for their study and religious transmissions. On 8 February, 2017, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, the Queen Mother of Bhutan said, "It is my belief that Buddhism - our shared spiritual heritage - is the unchanging constant in our age-old relationship"(Wangchuk 2018).

Tibetan Buddhist leaders and monasteries are the best assets of India on which India can claim leadership in the Buddhist world. As previously mentioned, Tibetan refugees help India to fundamentally revive Buddhist scholarship, tantric practices and sacred places in India and Himalayan regions to legitimise India's Buddhist authority.

Improving Education Among the Himalayan People

Tibetan leaders gave priority to education as soon as they arrived in India and requested India to allow them to administer separate schools for Tibetan children to preserve their culture and language. With the help of the Nehru government and international refugee sponsors, the Tibetans began to build many schools in India and Nepal. According to the Tibetan's official data, they currently oversee 73 Tibetan schools, excluding the pre-primary and private schools, providing free education to over 24,000 students (Central Tibetan Administration-b 2020).

Tibetan Government-in-Exile indirectly supervises nine universities and institutes for higher studies such as the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), The Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, The Central Institute of Himalayan Culture Studies, Sarah College, and the Centre for Academy of Tibetan Culture (CATC). Among them, the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) is dedicated to reviving Buddhist scholarship and literature in Sanskrit language and serves at scholarly bridge between Indian and Tibetan scholars (Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies 2020). All these institutes are equally open to the Himalayan students for admission.

Furthermore, numerous other institutes, located in many places in India, either run by Tibetan government or Tibetan private enterprise, offer professional studies such as Tibetan medicine and astrology as well as training students in contemporary professional skills including cooking, engineering, mechanics and computer applications. They also offer the programs to Indian Himalayan students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and give them free education or at a minimum tuition fee—for instance, Men-Tsee Khang in Dharamsala and TCV Vocational Training Centre in Dehradun.

These institutes are initially built for Tibetan refugees, but they always have a special consideration to the Himalayan students, especially from disadvantaged background. In recent years, the education policy was made even more flexible for Himalayan students. Consequently, thousands of Himalayan students are currently studying and training at these schools and institutes, and the number is consistently increasing each year. As early as in 2015, Tibet Times reported that 707 new students are enrolled in Upper Tibetan Children's Village School (TCV); 7 students are from Tibet, and 441 are Tibetans born in India and the other 259 students are Indian Himalayan students (Gyatso and Pema 2015). Manjushree Orphanage for Tibetan Children in Tawang was initially founded by Lama Thupten Phuntsok, a Tibetan refugee monk and Dr Kazuko Tatsumura for Tibetan orphans but now the 60% of the children are local Indians (Luce 2019.). They have to expand the school every year to accommodate more local Himalayan orphans and provide them with good education. In Dharamshala, Lama Jamyang is

a Tibetan refugee monk, who decided to devote his life to give home and education to Indian slum-children. Lama Jamyang efforts to develop *Tong-Len* Charitable Trust, building a school and clinical centre and changing the future of hundreds of Indian slum-children (Tong-Len 2020). There are many such exemplary institutes and organisations initiated by Tibetan refugees, actively working mainly in India, followed by Nepal and beyond.

As discussed previously, there are currently about 300 Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in India, providing education to approximately 35,000 monks and nuns. They provide both religious and secular education without the burden of tuition fee, accommodation and other expenses. Every year, the number of Himalayan monks and nuns are increasing in these institutes. Pema Choejor, the Minister for Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, answered to an enquiry of a Tibetan MP in March 2016, "Apart from the major Gelug pa monasteries, most of the monasteries have more Himalayans than Tibetans. Overall, 40% of the monks and nuns in Tibetan religious institutes are now Himalayans"(Dhondup 2016).

Most Tibetan monasteries have separate schools, teaching the curriculums of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) or sometimes regional Indian school curriculums. The children who came to monasteries are first enrolled in the monastery schools and taught secular education for years. For instance, Sera Jey monastery, one of the Tibetan monasteries in South India, described their school as "a well-established modern Secondary School functioning from Class I to X with CBSE affiliation"(Sera Jay School 2020) and " has a regular annual strength of over 700 novice student monks, teachers and staff"(Sera Jay School 2020). Drepung Loseling School, run by another Tibetan monastery, has classes from primary to the high school level and has 295 students and 25 staff members (Drepung Loseling 2020). If a monk or nun decides to join the monastery after their schooling, they can continue the Buddhist studies and practices and stay there for the rest of their lives. Otherwise, they can also join any other Indian and Tibetan colleges and higher studies institutes to further pursue secular education.

During the 8th session of the 16th Tibetan Parliament, Tibetan Minister for Religion and Culture said that " most of the smaller Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in India and Nepal are now becoming 80% Himalayans and 20% Tibetans"(Tibet TV. 2019). Thousands of Himalayan people are given opportunities at Tibetan institutes either overseen by Tibetan Government-in-Exile or private Tibet related organisations. These institutes continuously contribute to Himalayan society. The Dalai Lama, on several occasions, explained that the Tibetan religious institutes and educational centres would be administered by Indians and Himalayan people for their own benefit even after Tibet achieves independence (Tibet Times 2020).

Besides, many individual Tibetans are also making contributions to Indian education, culture, security and heritage preservation among others. We will look at the case of two Tibetan individuals. Konchog Tenzin Kunsang Thrinle Lhundrup, the Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, who was born in Lhasa in 1946, escaped to India as a Tibetan refugee. In the 1980s, Rinpoche decided to build his first centre in Dehradun, Uttarakhand in India. Today the Rinpoche oversees four monasteries and nunneries and one college to provide both religious and secular education to over hundreds of Indians and Himalayan people. Rinpoche also opened a research centre known as Songsten Library to preserve rare Buddhist manuscripts and religious heritages in the Himalayan regions. Rinpoche also started several initiatives such as the Vikramashila Translation Project to revive Himalayan culture and heritage (Drikung Kagyu 2020). Jigme Pema Wangchen, the Gyalwang Drukpa Rinpoche, was born to Tibetan refugee parents in Tso Pema (Rewalsar) in Himachal Pradesh. He was educated and trained under the guidance of many Tibetan Lamas, including the Dalai Lama. Rinpoche, for the last four decades, established, among others, monasteries, nunneries, modern schools, hospitals in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan and Nepal, and provides education and life-skills to over thousands of Himalayan people. Rinpoche's works excelled beyond the religious boundary, he launched an initiative to plant one million trees in Ladakh, and it has received the recognition of Guinness World Records for "Most Trees Planted"(Drukpa 2020).

Providing Special Military Service

As the Chinese occupation escalated in the 1950s, many thousands of Tibetans, especially those who escaped from the eastern borders, formed a military group, later named *Chushi Gangdruk* (Four Rivers and Six Ranges). They were involved in resisting the invasion of Tibet. With the help of the CIA, the armed forces bravely fought against the Chinese PLA and also escorted the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leaders on their route to India (Dunham 2004, 144-150). By the end of 1959, Tibetan guerrillas decided to withdraw into the borders of India, Bhutan, and Nepal to regroup and reorganize (སྐུ་མོ་ཆེ་རིང་། 1992, 164-168). As John Kenneth Knaus, a CIA case officer who in the late 1950s and in the 1960s helped train and direct Tibetan guerrillas against Chinese forces narrates, " Neither the Tibetans nor the Americans were willing to give up the struggle"(Knaus 2003, 72). In 1960, the Tibetan guerrilla leaders gathered in Kalimpong and decided to establish a new military base in Mustang with the help of the CIA to continue the guerrilla operation in Tibet. Mustang was immediately inundated with thousands of volunteer Tibetan freedom fighters from different parts of India, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan.

The news was immediately exposed to the Indian press. The Indian government was obviously not happy with this guerrilla initiative taking place without their knowledge. According to Kalsang Yeshi, the nephew of Bawa Yeshi, one of the main leaders of Mustang Guerrilla Operation, the Indian government ordered some Tibetan guerrilla leaders such as Sangdong Lobsang Nyandrak, Drupa Rinchen Tsering, Chagod Namchak Dorjee to report to the Delhi court and kept them under house arrest for nine months (Kalsang 2009). The Mustang Guerrilla Operation, however, went ahead as it had planned in Nepal and undertook several crucial attacks on Chinese military forces in Tibet.

Indo-China negotiation to settle the border dispute deteriorated and the Chinese PLA subsequently launched an offensive military attack on India in October 1962. The Chinese PLA advanced their attacks from several disputed border regions and defeated Indian military force. A top Indian military general recalled, "India finally convinced itself that it is not possible to trust the Chinese anymore"(Thimayya 1963,52). In

this situation, Kodendera Subayya Thimayya, a distinguished general of the Indian army, proposed Delhi to recruit Tibetan guerrilla fighters to help India. The general wrote, "We should come to some satisfactory arrangements with our friends [Tibetan guerrillas] to help us if we are again attacked before we ourselves are ready"(Thimayya 1963,52). John Knaus argued that India suddenly found the Mustang "force as an asset on which it could draw to resist further Chinese military expansion"(Knaus 2003,73).

India then persuasively campaigned among Tibetan guerrilla fighters through Tibetan representatives to join them in the Indian army to fight against China. India knows precisely this is what all Tibetan fighters want to do. Nyendrak, a former Tibetan soldier from the SFF, said, "Every Tibetan wants to fight China because that fight is not just for India, it is also for our own land. It is also for our identities, that were snatched away from us"(Purohit 2020). Under that slogan of fighting against China, several thousand Tibetans guerrillas were easily recruited and formed to patrol India's border in late 1962(Government of India 1992).

India also mobilised Tibetans and founded a special force group, popularly known as Establishment 22 to fight against China, which gradually became the Special Frontier Force (SFF). Namgyal Wangdu, an ex-SFF training leader, recalled, " the newly recruited Tibetans in the Establishment 22 were so eager to fight against China that many of them even refused to accept monthly salary"(རྣམ་རྒྱལ་དབང་འདུས། 2003, 355). John Knaus narrated that "by 1969 the Indians had acquired a more immediately valuable force of several thousand other Tibetans organized as the Special Frontier Force"(Knaus 2003, 74). Claude Arpi confirms that Establishment 22 is just another name for the SFF, which was established in November 1962 (Arpi 2012).

In 1971, during a war that led to the formation of Bangladesh, this establishment played a crucial role. Knowing the significance of long-term political security, India actively supported East Pakistan both politically and financially in their freedom struggle. India finally decided to send military forces after West Pakistan launched a pre-emptive air strikes on Indian territory. Indra Gandhi, the prime minister of India,

directly ordered the SFF to lead the counterattack at Chittagong in East Pakistan, which was the epicentre of the battle. Under the name of the Operation Mountain Eagle, three thousand Tibetan soldiers secretly marched toward East Pakistan in November 1971. After weeks of intensive fighting at the borders, the SFF divided its six battalions into three columns and marched into East Pakistan on 3 December, 1971. Deploying their guerrilla training skills in the marshy and rugged terrains, the SFF destroyed strategic bridges, communication lines and military posts in Chittagong (TRT World. 2020).

Dhaka Tribune reported on this as follows: Weeks before the India-Pakistan war broke out on 3 December 1971, the [Tibetan]guerrillas virtually liberated large swatches of CHT with pre-emptive strikes before the Indian army barged into Chittagong (Samad 2019). The West Pakistan soldiers were terrified by the tactics and bravery of the SFF, which earned them the title 'the Phantoms of Chittagong'. East Pakistan was liberated on 16th December, 1971, but 56 soldiers of the Special Frontier Force including a high-ranking Tibetan officer Dhondup Gyatotsang, were killed and nearly two hundred were wounded.

Claude Arpi, a well-known political expert on Indo-Tibetan relations argued that the Tibetan SFF was "instrumental in the fall of Chittagong"(Claude 2003) and defeated West Pakistan. The Tibetan SSF soldiers, however, " were fighting for the cause of their host country and for the liberation of another country — not for Tibet"(Claude 2011). The war was over, but "unfortunately, their [the Tibetan SFF] sacrifice was never officially recognised-- neither by India nor by Bangladesh"(Samad 2019). However, Tashi Phuntsok, a former soldier of the SFF, said, "it's just an occasion to express gratitude to India for hosting us in exile"(The Economic Times 2020). Tibetan SFF soldiers provided security protection to Rajiv Gandhi and his family after the assassination of Indra Gandhi for months, which reflects the trust earned by the Tibetan SFF from top Indian leaders.

In the 1980s, India and Pakistan military forces competed to take control of Siachen glacier by establishing strategic military posts (Wirsing 2003), and the tension escalated due to militant activities in Kashmir (India

Today 2015). Delhi leaders deployed the SFF who were able to seize the significant posts on Siachen glacier because of Tibetans' natural resilience at high altitude and in harsh climates. Losing strategic positions in the mountains, Pakistani soldiers began to infiltrate into Indian territory disguised as Kashmiri militants to work with Kashmiri secessionists (Kapur 2007,118).

In early 1999, the Pakistan army sent Kashmiri guerrillas and Afghan mercenaries to take control of Kargil regions, India dispatched an additional force of the SFF to attack Kashmiri guerrillas. The SFF easily defeated the opposition forces. After a month, the SFF again joined with the Indian army and launched major offensives in several border areas and took control of the whole Kargil region. On 14 July, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, declared the victory of Operation Vijay and the war was finally over on 26 July, 1999.

Tenzin Wangpo, a Tibetan refugee and former SFF soldier, recalled, "We led the operation and pushed the Pakistan army further into their own territory until we were ordered to withdraw"(ཐོགས་མེད། 2020, 32). More than 40 Tibetan soldiers of the SFF were said to be martyred during the Kargil war, but it is impossible to find official documents to confirm the number. Four Param Vir Chakra and eleven Maha Vir Chakra, the first and second highest military recognitions, were awarded to Indian soldiers who fought bravely in the Kargil war, but not even a single Tibetan soldier was publically recognised and rewarded. For the last six decades, the SFF is one of the leading Indian forces to protect the border between India and Tibet (China), India and Pakistan and Indian and Bangladesh. India, however, always restrained Tibetan soldiers of the SFF from fighting against China directly, an opportunity that the SFF soldiers have been dreaming for decades.

After a deadly military clash between India and China over the border dispute in June 2020, India decided to deploy the SFF to the border. At the end of August, the PLA troops carried out provocative military movements whilst the two countries were engaging in diplomatic dialogue to change the status quo. The SFF forces thus immediately launched an operation to seize a strategic mountain position in Pangong Tso, which

was successful, although two members of the SFF were killed. The news of the SFF operation was reported widely in the Indian media. Kunal Purohit, an analyst for South China Morning Post wrote, "But now, with Saturday night's encounter [SFF's encounter PLA soldiers], the spotlight is finally shining upon the paramilitary unit – and, with it, on the community"(Purohit 2020).

Thardoe, a former soldier of the SFF, could not contain his excitement upon hearing the news of the SFF's actions. He said, "When I heard what the SFF did, it gave me goosebumps"(Purohit 2020) When he called his friends, still serving at the SFF, "everyone is in full *josh* [excitement]"(Purohit 2020).

Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, a member of parliament (MP) of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, told Reuters, "We respect and love India for giving us shelter, but it is time the nation acknowledges the crucial role played by our men in the SFF"(Jain and Ghoshal 2020). An Indian political expert, who chose to remain anonymous, told this author, "If an Indian soldier was killed in the war, he/she became a martyr and the government pays a rich tribute. But, when a Tibetan soldier loses life for India, nobody knows, and nobody will recognise what the fellow has done".

Conclusion

For the last six decades, India has provided generous hospitality to the Tibetan refugees including the Dalai Lama who were forced to escape from Tibet in 1959. Tibetans were given settlements and allowed to establish schools and monasteries to preserve their identity and continue their freedom struggle. From the individual to official level, Tibetans repeatedly expressed their gratitude toward India and Indian people. The Tibetan Government-in-Exile even observed the year 2018 as 'Thank You India Year' for India's support to Tibet and its cause (Bureau Reporter 2020).

Tibetan leaders, including the Dalai Lama has consistently aided India to legitimise India's legal border stands such as the McMahon Line and Ladakh-Tibet border issues. Tibetans, at the same time established many religious centres and academic institutes that played crucial role in reviving Buddhist scholarship in India that directly relates to millions

of Indians living in the Himalayan regions. Tibetan spiritual leaders also endorse India's legitimacy as leadership in the Buddhist world, which enhanced India's soft power and helped to keep power balance against China in South Asian countries.

Many hundreds of Himalayan monks and nuns are studying at various Tibetan religious institutes and other private educational centres and receiving access to both religious and secular education free of cost. Besides, Tibetan schools provide free education to many Himalayans along with the Tibetan refugee students at over 70 different official schools and the students can also choose a professional career at various Tibetan professional training centres.

Under the name of the Special Frontier Force (SFF) Tibetan soldiers for many decades protected the Indian borders. Tibetan refugee soldiers made contributions in the Bangladesh Liberation War, Operation Cactus, Kargil War and Operation Rakshak among others. Hundreds of Tibetan warriors sacrificed their lives for ensuring national security and protecting the peace and freedom of this country. For the last 60 years, India allowed Tibetans not just to survive but to thrive with their unique culture and polity and provided them with necessary assistance to sustain them in exile successfully. In this privileged situation, Tibetan refugees worked hard not to become a burden of this great host-country. They kept their efforts to be productive in the land that they dearly call *Phayul Nyipa* (second home) and made significant contributions to Indian politics, culture, religion, education and military.

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The Tibet Question in the EU-China Relations: Real or Myth?

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Abstract

With the widening and deepening of bilateral economic and political relations between the EU and China, multiple social and political issues have emerged on the horizon. In a globalized world, interdependency defines the 21st century relations between countries in which issues are often interlinked. This is true of how the Tibet issue plays a major factor in the EU-China relations, especially during times marked by internal turmoil such as the Tiananmen Square movement in 1989, the 2008 uprising inside Tibet and the subsequent meetings between the Dalai Lama and the European leaders which have upset the relations at large. This article will be an attempt to underline the nuances of this relationship, and in particular will focus on the less discussed role of Tibet as a factor that influences the EU – China trade and economic interactions. It will seek to define the Tibet factor, and why does it affect the EU's trade with China, within the larger held perception that norms and values do not significantly feature in a mercantile world?

Keywords: EU, China, Tibet, the Dalai Lama, Trade, Human Rights

Europe envisioned Tibet in mystical terms in popular culture as portrayed in large production of movies, books, travelogue and stories (Dodin and Rather 2001). Tibet was a "Shangri-la" to the Western imagination, an isolated kingdom, a forbidden land and a mystical land yet to be explored by the Europeans. It later began to play a significant role in the European power struggle in Asia. Tibet, as a part of the great power politics in the early 20th century, was not only deprived of the status of a sovereign state despite carrying out several activities as an independent country, but was discounted as a minority nationality and later accepted as a part of Chinese territory. Today, Tibet has become a popular

tourist destination for foreigners that continue to generate significant revenues for the region (Siqi 2018). However, since March 2008, Tibet has remained closed for foreign visitors every year for at least a month after a widespread protest across the region that was met with violent Chinese state suppression (Metten and Metten 2018). Although Chinese jurisdiction over Tibet has been accepted internationally, the continued protests inside Tibet, the human rights activism gaining significant support outside Tibet and the Dalai Lama leading the Tibetan struggle has raised questions regarding China's legitimacy over the region.

Furthermore, China's relations with foreign countries have been disrupted by these issues pertaining to human rights violations inside Tibet, in particular in the European Parliament. In fact, from 1987 to 2020, there have been 48 resolutions introduced in the European Parliament on Tibet and human rights (The International Camapaign for Tibet 2020). Such an extensive stand and support for the Tibet issue from the European Parliament is difficult to overlook in terms of how one defines the 'Tibet factor' in China-EU relations. A more pertinent question is whether this factor is, in any tangible sense, real or a myth, especially in the EU-China economic relations. It is not difficult to imagine the issue playing a significant role in the political aspects of the EU-China interactions, since the EU has a strong morally-induced foreign policy. Ian Manners argues that the EU is in itself a normative power by virtue and acts in a normative (i.e., ethically good) way (Manners 2008). The question also arises on how do we define the Tibet factor, and why does it affect the EU's trade with China, within the larger held perception that norms and values do not significantly feature in a mercantile world? This article will attempt to elucidate on these questions.

The EU as an institution was established in the mid-20th century, while its relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) was formally established only in 1975 (European External Action Service 2012). The trajectory of the EU-China relations encounters aspects of both partnership and rivalry. According to the latest Joint Communication by the European Commission, the nature of the EU-China relations took a shift after the EU labelled Beijing as an "economic competitor and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance" (European

Commission 2019). Despite being each other's largest trading partner for the last 14 years, coupled with extensive cooperation on many fields, there are difficulties and issues that concern both the parties. Therefore, the study also dwells into how their differences on human rights issues, particularly on Tibet, plays out in the dynamics of trade and economic relations.

EU-China Trade and Economic Relations

The EU and China have given more importance over their economic relations rather than political relations since the inception of their relationship in 1975. China's economic growth combined with the reform and opening-up policy led to the signing of trade agreements between the European Economic Community (EEC) and PRC in 1985 and the establishment of a Joint Committee (European External Action Service 1985). From then on, China and the EU have gradually developed into a significant economic and trade partners, despite the economic sanctions in 1989 after the Tiananmen Square crackdown. The newly established ties between the EU and China hit a severe setback after the EC (European Commission) froze relations with China as an immediate reaction to the Tiananmen incident that resulted in the reduction of almost half of the trade between the EU and China between 1989 and 1991, from US$23.5 billion to $11.6 billion (European Commission 1995). The EU still refuses to remove the arms embargo although it has lifted most of the sanctions imposed on China. Along with the practice of the EU tabling resolutions that criticize China's Human Rights record in the annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the arms embargo remains the only surviving vestiges of the multilayered reaction against China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Protests.

Although there are economic issues regarding market economy status, China's protectionist measures, intellectual property rights, arms embargo and other factors that hinder the growth of China-EU relations as economic partners, steps were taken from both sides to increase interaction that entails a number of agreements, meetings and exchanges between the two. For instance, since 1975 there have been 22 EU-China Summits, 8 High Level Economic and Trade Dialogues and 10 High

Level Strategic Dialogues among numerous other meetings between the leaders and officials as well as multiple bilateral and multilateral agreements (European External Action Service 2018). Over the past decades, the development of the EU-China relations has seen tremendous changes that provide numerous opportunities for the two partners to engage more intensively, leading to one of the most significant trading partnerships of the 21st century. Today, China and EU are the two largest trading partners in the world with annual trade volume exceeding U.S. $550 billion (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union 2014). China is the EU's second largest trading partner, while the EU has been China's top trading partner for 10 years with Beijing expecting the latter to become its largest trading and investment partner (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union 2003).

Beijing's deep interest in European advance technology is due to the realization of the impact of digital economy in a digital age and its significance for China's growth. The fifth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee in Beijing held in October 2020, which laid out the Party's vison for the next five year, specifically emphasized on gaining technological independence and gaining prowess in cyber-security and digital economy (CGTN 2020). The EU and China signed a key agreement on telecommunication system, or 5G, during the EU-China high level Economic and Trade Dialogue in Beijing in 2015. Hence, digital economy and digital connectivity have become important and sensitive matters in the framework of the EU dialogue and bilateral engagement (European Institute of Asian Studies 2020). The rapid development of China from a developing country to a fast-growing emerging economy has placed it as the second largest economy in the world with an average GDP growth at almost 10 percent a year, paving the way for the further development of China-EU economic and trade relations (The World Bank 2020).

To further deepen China-EU economic ties, the European Investment Bank established its first project in China in 1994. In 2013 it launched negotiations for an investment agreement that aimed to provide long-term access to the EU and Chinese markets and to protect investors

(European Commission 2020). Today, the EU-China trade in services amounts to more than 10 per cent of total trade in goods, and the EU's exports of services make up 19 percent of the EU's total exports of goods (European Commission 2020). The EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation reemphasized that they share one of the world's most dynamic trading relationships with investment exchanges as the major engine driving their economic relations and trade growth (European External Action Service 2020).

The EU has always maintained the importance of Chinese market for European investors. The 'New Asia Strategy' of the EU recognized the importance of Chinese economy among others in Asia (European Commission 1994). This policy paper by the European Commission was the first time that such comprehensive strategy towards Asia was adopted to establish an economic and political profile in the region. Although the EU-China relations began to improve, it was not until EU could unanimously formulate a policy towards China that the EU-China relations could be upgraded. Therefore, for the first time, a coherent strategy towards China was formed and articulated with the publication of EU's first Communication titled, *A long-term policy for China-Europe relations* in 1995, which marked a watershed moment in the EU's relation with China. The document facilitated subsequent developments not only in terms of economic ties, but also for political and security relations. The EU consistently has based its policies towards China on the content of the 1995 document which serves as an important backdrop for the future development of its policy towards China, not to mention its economic strategy as well. The paper recognized the importance of China for Europe on both security and economic issues while calling for a constructive engagement in terms of supporting its participation in the international community as well as for a stable and peaceful Asia.

Within this engagement, the 1995 document emphasized the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the formulation of the EU's global policy, not just in terms of their normative value but also as a factor to maintain long-term social and political stability. With regards to China, the EU sought to pursue the issue of human rights on three levels. First, it would support efforts in China to open

up, reinforcing development of civil society based on the rule of law. Secondly, it would regularly raise human rights issue in bilateral dialogue with China and thirdly, it would engage the international community in dialogues through multilateral fora such as the United Nations (European Commission 1995). Although the EU raised the issue of human rights abuses in Tibet and East Turkistan (which is now called Xinjiang under PRC) in their joint summit, the human rights activists and campaigners pressed the bloc to be more vocal on this issue (Elmer 2019). The 21st EU-China Summit held in April 2019 in Brussels under the title, *EU-China Summit: Rebalancing the Strategic Partnership,* has emphasized China as a vital partner for the EU while maintained that the protection and improvement of human rights as one the core of the EU's position (European Commission 2019).

It is often true that economic interests outweigh human rights values as the latter is often discussed in the halls of political and public forums but without any discernable changes or improvement on the ground. However, the human rights issue has become an important part of the EU-China bilateral discussions. The Tibet issue for instance has gained prominence since it featured in both the EU and China's policy papers. China's policy papers on EU released in 2003, 2014 and 2018 has urged the EU to respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and condemned support for Tibet or any meetings with the Dalai Lama. Subsequently the 11th EU-China Summit was cancelled after the French President Sarkozy met with the Dalai Lama. The questions of democracy, human rights and the rule of law have long been a source of tension in the EU-China relations, with the two having held different positions and views on the issue.

The EU – China Relationship in a New Emerging International World Order

Human rights and political values, within the framework of the question over norms and values, have been influential factors in the development of China–EU relations. Both of them fundamentally differ in their approach and how they identify themselves vis-a-vis the other. This has significantly influenced their policies towards one another and towards the larger international world order. Following the tumultuous regime

of Mao Zedong, the West attempted to engage with China on the premise that it would be a contributing member of the West-led liberal international world order. The 1995 policy dossier on China by the EU emphasized heavily on attempting to bring the former into the existing international system, from sharing responsibilities in tackling global and regional security issues to assisting China towards contributing to global economic stability by allowing it to participate in the system and economic institutions of the liberal world order (European Commission 1995).

However, the turn of the 21st Century, which has been marked by the "China Rise" and "China Dream" projects of Beijing, has increasingly seen China's unhappiness with the existing global governance framework, which Kissinger in 2011 described aptly as being borne out of its unwillingness to "adjusting [itself] to membership in an international system designed in its absence on the basis of programs it did not participate in developing" (Kissinger 2011). Recent years has witnessed China increasingly seeking out alternatives to international institutions that it deems as hindering its national interests. For example, China has sought to integrate both its Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) partners and its regional neighbors into economic ventures that rival those of the liberal international system, including the New Development Bank (widely perceived as an alternative to the World Bank and the IMF); the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)–initiated free trade agreement (FTA) that China has ardently championed; an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (a rival to the Asian Development Bank); and an Asia-Pacific FTA (that would knit China closer to its neighbors in Asia). In other regions of the world, Beijing has initiated the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, and a variety of similar bodies that privilege China's position and undermine standards of governance set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and other international institutions.

As a consequence of such measures, Harris Online in Europe between 2009 and 2010 showed that a significant number of respondents in

Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Germany considered China as the biggest threat to the global stability (Luo and Lars 2011). Its economic and political policies is reflected in its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP) deal and its increasing influence in the Central and Eastern European countries. Beijing's active engagement with its 17+1 group that include 12 EU member states and China as its head has attracted speculation from various quarters (Kavalski 2019). Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign affairs chief, recently pointed out that the "current relations between Brussels and Beijing weren't always based on trust, transparency and reciprocity" (Associated Press 2020). The relationship continues to suffer after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and has exposed some fundamental differences between the two by reflecting the deep-rooted clash on their beliefs and their normative identities. For example, the EU has a strong belief in the institution of democracy and considers it important to uphold the preservation of civil, political and religious rights of the people. As it is already a signatory to all the UN conventions, EU has asked China to not only be a member but that it should ratify the two most important conventions on human rights i.e. the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as, without considering improvement in human rights in China, the EU would not consider the lifting of the arms embargo (Men 2008).

The significance of China-EU partnership entails cooperation at various levels, namely, the political, economic, and cultural or people-to-people exchange which was enumerated in China's EU policy paper of 2003 and in every sucessive policy papers thereafter. China's first policy paper on EU was released only in 2003, while at the same time the EU endorsed its fifth policy paper on China. The 2003 policy paper on EU aimed to enhance cooperation and promote long-term and stable development of the relationship (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union 2003). Beijing understands the prominence of EU in global politics and recognizes the EU as a major force in the world today. Both sides have stressed that trade and economic relation is one of the fundamental pillars of their relationship with China stating that

it aims to deepen its economic cooperation with the EU under the principles of mutual benefit, reciprocity and consultation on an equal basis (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union 2014). On the other hand, the EU while committed towards improving trade relations with China, has also stressed the need to ensure that China should adopt fair trade practices, respect intellectual property rights and meet its obligations as a member of the WTO (European Commission 2019).

The Tibet factor in the EU-China Relations

The EU and China are strategic partners at present, a partnership that does not only focus on trade and economic relations but also includes discussion on issues which are sensitive for China. The human rights issue, Tibet in particular, is one such area of discussion on which China significantly differs in its opinion from the EU. To China, the issue of Tibet is purely an internal matter and has been persistantly stated in their public statements. China's foreign ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu, in the aftermath of the global outcry over its high-handed response to the 2008 protests in Tibet, reiterated the Party line that the Tibet issue was completely China's internal affairs and no foreign country or international organization has the right to interfere (Phillips 2008). Furthermore, China considers the Dalai Lama a splittist and anathema to its national and foreign interests. Therefore, any European officials' meeting with the Dalai Lama or any European states receiving him regularly leads to severe diplomatic tensions between China and countries hosting the Dalai Lama. However, the Dalai Lama is a revered spiritual leader and is regularly invited to various international forums and universities in Europe. In fact, an internet polling company, YouGov conducted an online poll, according to which, the Dalai Lama is not only the seventh on an international list of the most admired people in the world but gained the top spot of popularity in numerous European countries such as France, Britain, Germany, Norway, Sweden, etc. (Jordan 2015). As a result, he has found favor in his consistent encouragement of European officials to push China towards engaging in a substantive and constructive dialogue with his representatives to resolve the issue of Tibet by addressing core issues such as the preservation of the Tibetan language, culture, religion and freedom of press (Phillips 2008).

During the 11th EU-China summit in 2009, the issue of Tibet yet again popped up as one of the major reasons behind postponing the summit for a few months due to their disagreement on many issues but it was finally held on 20 May in the Czech capital of Prague (Tibetan Review 2009). During the summit, all 27 nations of the EU wanted China to ensure freedom of speech and protect the rights of ethnic minorities especially in regard to Tibet. China instantly took a stand against this notion and warned the EU not to interfere in its internal affairs. The summit saw discussions on a range of issues, from minority rights to Taiwan to trade and climate change, where China and the EU disagreed, with the then Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao asked the EU to stick to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs (Tibetan Review 2009). But the Czech President Vaclav Klaus maintained a firm stand on the issue of human rights, adding how future talks, in particular strategic dialogues, with China would depend on how it maintained its human rights record (Tibetan Review 2009). President's Klaus's reaction was possibly inspired by his endearing relationship with the Dalai Lama. The general held belief is that European countries are no longer willing to condemn China over its intransigence over human rights issues. The year 2020 proved to be an exception when Prague terminated its relationship with Beijing and opted for Taiwan by refusing to commit to the 'One China policy' (Reuters 2020). While Prague Mayor, Zdenek Hrib approached Taiwan on the ground that both nations share democratic values and respected fundamental human rights and cultural freedom, he also criticized Chinese policies in Tibet. Furthermore, in 2008 Czech President Vaclav Klaus and the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk decided not to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games in protest at the crackdown in Tibet (Phillips 2008). Similarly, a series of European leaders including, French leader Nicolas Sarkozy, British PM Gordon Brown, Italian Premier Berlusconi and European Union Foreign Minister all boycotted the Beijing Olympic Games over their handling of the Tibet issue.

It is understood from China-EU relations that one cannot operate any kind of relations among nations without the political issue intertwining with economic matter. The EU-China trade relations

reflect disagreements on many issues despite their successful growth in their economic relationships. Unencumbered by the domestic political trade-offs, either for the purpose of elections or with the private market players, that are characteristic of liberal free market economy, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is able to significantly draw upon its freedom to influence trade policies which then allows it to utilize trade flows as a tool to bolster its foreign policies. Andreas Fuchs and Nils-Hendrik Klann conducted an empirical analysis on whether China responds to meetings between its trading partners and the Dalai Lama with systematic economic punishment. Their study was based on the data on the exports to China from 159 partner countries between 1991 and 2008 and by analyzing if there was a reduction in exports to China due to countries receiving the Dalai Lama as a punishment. Interestingly, the empirical data collected by Andreas and Klann demonstrated the existence of a negative effect of the Dalai Lama receptions at the highest political level on exports to China during the Hu Jintao era (2002–2008) and not in earlier periods (Fuchs and Klann 2013). The meetings between the heads of state and the Dalai Lama led to a reduction of exports to China by 16.9 percent on an average, reducing exports of machinery and transport equipments (Fuchs and Klann 2013).

It is a known fact that China and the EU are going to be the largest trade partners in the world and that both will need to compromise on many issues that they don't agree with. Both of them are involved in numerous dialogues and have also signed many agreements that enhance their overall relationship. However, with the growing Chinese economy and the asymmetry of trade relations shifting in China's favor, the Chinese government is seen using its trade ties through economic sanctions to induce political compliance in an ever-increasing manner (McGregor 2019). During the official meeting between the Dalai Lama and the President of European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Henri Malosse on 12 March, 2014 in Dharamshala, India, the latter showed strong support for the respect for human rights and fundamental values of freedom of expression while participating in the commemorative events of anniversary of the 1959 March 10 Tibetan Uprising (Central Tibetan Administration 2014). The tensions between China and the EU continued when the Dalai Lama visited Europe in 2012 and also

met with many European leaders, along with being accorded with an honorary citizenship by the city of Milan against the political pressure and threats from Chinese officials (Central Tibetan Administration 2016). The Chinese authorities similarly planned to block the Sino-Europe Sports Investment Management Changxing from transferring funds from China to complete the 740-million-euro ($785 million) deal as retaliation against Rome's actions towards welcoming the Dalai Lama (Bloomberg 2017).

China has always been sensitive about issues like human rights, Tibet and the Dalai Lama visiting foreign dignitaries, they see such actions as being illegal and separatist in nature. For instance, China threatened to cut economic ties with Norway for awarding the Dalai Lama the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 as well as condemned its decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the imprisoned democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo in 2010. However, in 2016, China and Norway normalized their relations after six years of rift between the two. This had human rights advocates expressing concerns against an increasing number of countries relenting on their commitment to democracy and human rights (Chan 2016). Similarly, the University of Sydney cancelled the Dalai Lama's talk on education in 2013 at the newly established Institute of Democracy and Human Rights. The then Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard was criticized for refusing to meet the Dalai Lama during a 2011 visit to avoid damaging the two-way trade agreements worth $120 billion with China (Taylor 2013). Germany's head of state, Angela Merkel in 2007 met with the Dalai Lama which was followed by the cancellation several bilateral meetings and caused severe damage to economic ties with China (Fuchs and Klann 2013). China even called-off one of its major summits with the EU in 2008 because of the Dalai Lama who was visiting Europe at the same time. The office of President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, the EU president, announced that the talks in Lyon had been cancelled because the Beijing leadership was furious that Sarkozy planned to meet the Tibetan leader in Poland (Traynor 2008). After the meeting between Sarkozy and the Dalai Lama, China crossed France off from the travel agenda of two Chinese trade delegations (Fuchs and Klann 2013).

Conclusion

It is important to examine the past trajectory and the importance of the EU-China relations in order to foresee future challenges and issues that might play a major role in the relationship. The inception of the EU-China diplomatic relations in 1975 and the growing interaction and deepening of their relations thereafter paved the way for the establishment of the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2003. According to the 2018 China's policy paper on the EU, the partnership entails an 'all-dimensional, multi-tiered and wide-ranging exchanges and cooperation' (Xinhua 2018).

While the European governments were criticized for prioritizing trade over principles with China and for treating human rights issues behind closed doors, their conflicts of values, economic interests and civil engagements have begun to emerge. These conflicts of interest are now beginning to redefine the EU-China relationship with the 2019 EU Strategic communication labeling Beijing as a "systemic rival" promoting alternative models of governance. Similarly, a recent 2020 policy brief from the director of the Asia Program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, Janka Oertel asserts that there is a convergence of EU member states viewing China in terms of the challenges that it poses to the European Bloc (Oertel 2020). The brief further argues that EU member states are increasingly turning impatient with China's unwillingness to trade with them on equal and fair grounds while they are recognizing the failure of the EU in confronting China on various political concerns of human rights violations by the latter. Such a convergence of assessments from these member states will lead to a more coherent European policy framework that addresses both the economic and political concerns, even at the cost of a geo-economic confrontation. This approach is largely in contrast to the conciliatory tone of the 1995 EU Communication on China.

This paper attempts to position Tibet within this relationship in order to observe whether the influence of the former on the latter is of actual political or economic consequence or whether it is relegated to the realms of "myths". Tibet has been pushed towards the discussion of human rights, away from political and economic questions of the EU-China

relationship. Although there is a large body of scholarship on EU-China relationship in general, there are almost none written specifically and extensively on the Tibet issue in this relationship, which lies in stark contrast to the literature that has been produced on the Tibet-Sino-American relationship. The Tibet question in the EU-China relations is most often discussed within the larger debate on the conceptual gaps, divergence over political values and in the normative differences between the EU and China. However, Tibet has been intricately woven within the inception and subsequent development of the EU-China partnership since 1975, with 48 resolutions being passed by the EU parliament and numerous visits by the Dalai Lama to its member states, which have subsequently invited the ire of the Chinese Government. It would not be amiss to argue that the increasing distancing of the EU member states from the erstwhile belief in China being a participatory member of the West-led world order that had defined the 1995 Communication has also, similarly, led to the subsequent increase in their interest in Tibet, along with other human rights issues such as the case of Liu Xiaobo, Uyghurs, Hong Kong, etc.

Tibet itself has been approached within the framework of the EU–China foreign relations in varying forms, from being discussed within the upper echelons of diplomatic discussions to multilateral forums such as the UN and the European Parliament to gaining significant public attention during the 2008 uprising, the spat of self-immolations that followed the Beijing Olympics and to the popularity of the Dalai Lama within the increasing interest of the Western World with Tibetan Buddhism and culture. However, the article argues that along with the normative contours of the Tibet factor in the EU–China diplomacy, it is a matter of significance to turn one's attention to the political and economic influence of the issue on this relationship and the changing nature of the Tibet element depending on particular social and political contexts. Therefore, will Tibet continue to occupy the normative space that has been delineated for it since the Nixon–Mao handshake of 1971 or will it down the garb of geo-strategic importance for the Western world as it strives to formulate methods on engaging with China as it stamps its importance for the neo-liberal Order led by the West but at the same time, seeks to mould it around its own center? The answers to the

questions will remain within the realms of speculation and theorizing yet their undeniable importance for international relations in post-COVID era needs to be taken under serious consideration and rigorous analysis.

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China and its Forum on Work in Tibet:[1] Special Emphasis on the Seventh Work Forum

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Abstract

This article attempts to analyze President Xi Jinping's speech at the seventh Tibet Work Forum from "security rationale" perspective. The notion is employed by Robert Barnett in his 2012 article (Barnett 2012). He has argued that the Party-state no longer sees monks and nuns which are referred to as religious professionals in the legal literature as hindrance only to development, rather they were viewed as a threat to the state's security. This has led to a significant shift in the policy. This article also briefly explains the past six work forums to explore the nuances of China's policies in Tibet predicated on twin polices of "development" and "stability", which are inextricably intertwined.

Keywords: Tibet, PRC, Tibet Work Forum, Minority Policy

Introduction

Since reform era, the Tibet Work Forum (TWF) or is formally called the National Forum on Work in Tibet (གུང་དབང་བོད་ཀྱི་ལས་དོན་སྐོར་གྱི་བཞུགས་མོལ་ཚོགས་འདུ།) has become the main policy organ for Tibet. The top leaders from the Party, state and military organs had attended the TWFs. More importantly, the forums have been chaired by the General Secretaries of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which reflects the importance of Beijing's policy formulation in Tibet. However, this doesn't mean

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1. Historically, Tibet comprised of three main regions: Amdo (northeastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet) and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). Under the current Chinese administrative division, U-Tsang and part of Kham are included in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which they refer to as Tibet (Xizang) and Amdo and Kham are merged into neighboring Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan. This article has benefited greatly from two anonymous reviews. The author would like to thank the reviewers for their invaluable comments.

that no policy implementation organ of this sort had existed during the party's nascent administration in Tibet. During its initial years, the Party leadership has formed a Tibet Working Committee, a shadow body where all the major policy decisions were formulated.[2]

The author uses Robert Barnet's 2012 article as a theoretical framework to advance my argument. I argue that the twin policies of "development" and "stability", which became the guiding principles of China's Tibet policy after the Third Work Forum in 1994, is still strongly emphasized under the current leadership of President Xi Jinping. Due to the paucity of official proceedings and credible policy documents, this limits the analysis to present detail accounts on how the policies would be implemented in coming years. However, Xi Jinping would in all likelihood continue the policies that we have seen since the last forum in 2015.

Brief Overview of the Past Tibet Work Forums

General Secretary Hu Yaobang convened the first TWF in March 1980 in Beijing. The Forum ushered in the most liberal period in recent history of Tibet. Hu Yaobang implemented a six-point policy directive designed to enhance economy, culture, education and leadership (Norbu 2001, 316-317). It is interesting to note that the appointment of Tibetans to the highest positions in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), including its Party Secretary was rumored to be part of the changes that Hu intended to bring for Tibet. A veteran Tibetan party leader, Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, who held positions of power in the 1950s, including a member of the Tibet Working Committee was said to be Hu's preferred candidate for the Party Secretary position. But his appointment didn't take place, perhaps due to strong opposition from some senior members of the Party (Shakya 1999, 380). Instead, Wu Jinghua (of Yi ethnicity) became the first non-Chinese to be given the position of Party Secretary of TAR since its formal inception in 1965. Hu's initiative of empowering Tibetan cadres in the leadership position is seen from the representation of the TAR Party Committee, in which five out of six Deputy Secretaries at the time were Tibetans (Shakya 1999, 406). And the percentage of Tibetan cadres exceeded 50

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2. See detail in historical introduction by Tsering Shakya in *Leaders in Tibet: A Directory* (Shakya 1990)

percent for the first time in 1981 and by 1986 the figure had risen to 60.3 percent (Shakya 1999, 389-390).

Furthermore, a number of Tibetan delegations from Dharamshala, the seat of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration more commonly known as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, had visited the TAR and other Tibetan areas on China's invitation from 1979 to 1985 (Norbu 2001, 315-339). And some hundreds of Tibetans were allowed to attend the religious teaching of the Dalai Lama at Bodh Gaya in northern India in February 1983 (Shakya 1999, 393). This clearly reflected a degree of leniency in the early 1980s. Yang Jingren, who was then head of the United Front Work Department (UFWD) described the party's policy in Tibet at the time as 'leniency' (Shakya 1999, 384).

Four years later in 1984, Genreal Secretary Hu Yaobang convened the second TWF in Beijing, which called for the "opening up" of Tibet. The primary focus of the forum was economic development, however political issues were also addressed. The forum announced 43 major construction projects in the TAR, at a total cost of 470 million yuan and all the projects were administered by "personnel supplied by the cooperating provinces and cities" (Warren W. Smith 2009, 586-587). One major policy shift after the second TWF was Hu's decision to reverse his earlier policy towards allowing autonomy for Tibetans by imposing restrictions on the number of Chinese cadre transfer into the TAR. The policy shift had been statistically corroborated by Yashen Haung, although his findings lacked two crucial components; "spontaneous migration" and "troop transfer" to determine the scale and purpose of transfer policy. He pointed out that "the scale of out-transfers was reduced progressively to only about 1 % in 1985, signaling the completion of the government's program of withdrawing Chinese cadres by the mid-1980s" (Huang 1995, 197-199). The "opening up" of Tibet has resulted in the migration of Han and Hui Chinese into the TAR (Topgyal 2016, 93-96). The influx of Chinese had caused serious concern over a fear that Tibetans would lose their jobs to migrants who were better educated and skilled. This had led to "protests" by some Tibetan party cadres (Shakya 1999, 395). The phenomenon of rapid increase in the number of Chinese presences in Lhasa was observed

by Beijing-based prominent Tibetan writer, Tsering Woeser during her several trips to Lhasa in the 1990s (Johnson 2014). The coming of railways into Tibet: the Qinghai-Tibet Railway that was completed and is in operation since 2006, and presently under construction, Sichuan-Tibet Railway (Desheng 2020) has further integrated Tibet with the rest of China.

Hu Yaobang's relatively liberal policies in Tibet didn't last long. In 1994, General Secretary Jiang Zemin convened the third TWF in Beijing. This forum unveiled twin policies of "Leapfrog Economic Development" and public denunciation of the Dalai Lama, which became the bedrock of China's management of Tibetan issues till date (Barnett 2012, 47-52). The official reference of the twin policies, however is "development" and "stability", in Chinese context, the latter is figuratively translated into protests or dissents allegedly instigated by the Dalai "clique" that would disrupt social stability. Carla Freeman has argued that this policy, on the one hand aims to improve the standard of living and to better integrate the whole economy of China. On the other hand, consistently downplaying ethnic-affairs slogan "we are all one family" (Freeman 2012).

Since the third TWF, Beijing implemented a stricter control on religious professionals where "anomalous" restrictions on religious practice such as prohibition on display and possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama. These "anomalous" restrictions, in most cases have no clear mention of a source (Barnett 2012, 79-81). It was at this forum the Party changed its perception on the Dalai Lama and started treating him as antagonistic and threat to the state's security (Barnett 2012, 49). The change was clearly reflected in the patriotic education manuals. One such description of the Dalai Lama in the manual is quoted in verbatim here:

> The Dalai is a conspirator, the chief of the splittist movement aspiring for Tibetan independence, the unequivocal tool of the western forces inimical towards China, the main source of all disturbances in Tibetan society, and the biggest stumbling block to the establishment of normal religious discipline in Tibetan Buddhism (TIN 1998).

After a gap of seven years, General Secretary Jiang Zemin convened the

fourth TWF in June 2001 in Beijing. The forum was largely a continuation of the previous forum in all respects (ICT 2010). The forum stipulated a total of 117 construction projects worth 31.2 billion yuan, and 70 projects were supported by Chinese provinces and municipalities with an investment of 1.062 billion yuan in medical care, education, sports, culture, energy, and urban and rural infrastructure (Liu 2015).

In January 2010, General Secretary Hu Jintao convened the fifth TWF in Beijing. Hu was a former Party Secretary of TAR from 1988 to 1992. At the age of 49, Hu was promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest-ranking bureau of the CCP, without sitting in the 25-member Politburo. Hu eventually succeeded Jiang Zemin to become General Secretary of the CCP at the 15th Party Congress in 2012. Although there is no evidence to suggest Hu's "Tibet connection" as a reason for his fast-track promotion, but it was clear that his absolute control of the 1989 protests in Lhasa through imposition of Martial Law has earned him unprecedented attention from the top Party leaders, including the paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping (Tseten 2014). Since the fifth Forum (CECC 2010), Tibet has witnessed a whole new level of state's surveillance and control. Chinese state's increasing surveillance of Tibetans has been done through highly intrusive social control mechanisms like "Grid Management" and "Double-Linked Household" (HRW 2013). The building of grid system in the TAR in 2012 was carried out under the instruction of then President, Hu Jintao. In the simplest sense, the grid system operates through subdividing neighborhood community into smaller grid units based on the size of population of the neighborhood. For example, the neighboring community of Ramoche in Lhasa is subdivided into three grid units. Each grid unit is run by government officials whose main task is to maintain social stability by preventing dissent or protest (HRW 2013). The launch of "Double-Linked Household" system in the TAR in 2013 enhanced the existing social control mechanisms like village and monastery resident cadre system. The "Double-Linked Household" system is basically a network in which virtually every movement is monitored and even the slightest deviation from the party line would be reported. A report shows that 81,140 "double-linked" household entities were set up throughout the TAR between 2012 to 2016 (Zenz 2020).

Under the "Solidifying the Foundation and Benefit the Masess" campaign, the TAR party leadership led by Chen Quanguo in October 2012 dispatched more than 7,000 monastery-resident cadres to station in 1,787 monasteries and more than 20,000 village-resident cadres in teams of four or more in each of the 5,451 villages in the TAR as part of the three-year program (ICT 2018). These cadres were assigned a task to fulfill three objectives: to strengthen the institutional party structure in rural areas by recruiting new party members, to build new security system and to "maintain stability" by "carrying out activities against the Dalai clique." The cadres were also required to collect detail information of every villagers and to carry out political education and to encourage Tibetans to "feel grateful to the party," to "feel the greatness of the party, listen to the party and follow the party." This aims "to firmly fight against separatist activity," and "to profoundly expose and criticize the Dalai clique" (HRW 2013). These highly intrusive social control mechanisms are being implemented in other Tibetan areas outside the TAR (ICT 2016), and are intended to achieve long-term stability on the Tibetan Plateau.

One significant shift in China's Tibet policy since the fifth TWF was Beijing's decision to include all Tibetan areas outside the TAR into a larger framework of the TWF in terms of policy coordination and implementation. In other words, the policies formulated in the past four TWFs were confined to TAR. Such accommodation could serve as a cornerstone for the Dalai Lama's demand for unification of all the Tibetan-inhabited areas in China under a single political and administrative entity. However, the decision surrounding the policy shift could be attributed to the widespread 2008 protests and the rise of self-immolation cases since 2009.

Not long before the sixth TWF convened by the General Secretary Xi Jinping in August 2015 in Beijing, Sun Chunlan, a member of the Politburo and head of the Central UFWD, made an inspection tour to Lhasa and Shigatse in the TAR (eng.tibet.cn 2015). This was followed by her second inspection tour to Tibetan-inhabited areas in Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai (eng.tibet.cn 2015). In a similar manner, Vice Premier of the State Council and Politburo member Wang Yang visited Lhasa and

Nagchu in TAR just a week ahead of the forum. Around the same time, Xu Qiliang, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission paid a visit to Chongqing and TAR (Arpi 2015). All these visits were probably to lay the groundwork for the sixth TWF and to discuss the preparations for the 50th founding anniversary of the TAR. The sixth TWF underscored the importance of building Tibet a "moderately prosperous society" as part of the nation-wide poverty alleviation program. In 2015, Xi Jinping made an announcement that he would end residual poverty among 70 million people located in 1,200 poor administrative villages in China by 2020. This includes the entire TAR and all Tibetan areas in neighboring provinces of Qinghai, Yunnan, Sichuan and Gansu. The program became a central development agenda of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020). During that period, 3,816 poverty alleviation projects with a total investment of 10.385 billion yuan were planned by the TAR (en.tibetol.cn 2017).

The urgency of Xi's signature goal of eradiating absolute poverty by 2020 can be seen in the official mandate in which government officials were required to sign statements committing themselves to fulfill the poverty reduction goals set by Xi. The lower-level officials were not to be promoted or transferred until their specific responsibilities for raising specified poor households out of poverty were successfully met (Holcombe 2017, 7-8). The program for poverty reduction efforts in the TAR has been ramped up since 2015. The Chinese government claimed that 628,000 people had been lifted out of poverty by the end of 2019 and 965 relocation camps were built since 2015 (Xinhua 2021). By the end 2020, China proclaimed a major victory against the poverty reduction in the TAR (Xinhua 2020). However, the actual policy implementation of the program for reduction of poverty is fraught with coercion. The poverty reduction drive in Tibetan areas were carried out under labor transfer and relocation programs. It is important to note that the poverty reduction drive in Tibetan areas goes hand in hand with social control and ideological indoctrination which is evident in a recent report by Adrian Zenz. The report shows that the poverty reduction drive in the TAR is connected to social control mechanisms like village-based work teams, "Gird Management" and "Double-Linked Household", which are hand in glove with security organs such as local Public Security Bureau. The

report also shows that the drive has resulted in coercive "military-style" vocational training of "lazy" Tibetan nomads and farmers which requires "diluting the negative influence of religion" and "backward thinking", which reflects Tibetans' unwillingness and resistance to the drive (Zenz 2020). Another report suggests that Tibetans were reluctant to comply with the orders because of heavy Chinese presence in the program's decision-making process at the local level (Holcombe 2017, 29).

Laying the Groundwork for the Seventh TWF

Xi Jinping convened the seventh TWF in August 2020 in Beijing. It is interesting to note that both the sixth and seventh TWFs held under Xi were convened right after the Beidaihe summit. This is a highly-secretive and important annual gathering of China's top leaders including the Party elders at a seaside resort in Hubei province where they would engage in horse-trading and discussion on other important issues concerning domestic and foreign policies. At the same time, we can't overlook the argument claiming that the seventh TWF was not solely intended for Tibet rather it was used as a pretext to highlight the geo-strategic importance of Tibet in China's foreign policy vis-à-vis India. This makes sense given the recent visit of Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to the TAR, including a trip to the disputed border with India (Jiangtao 2020). Although the name of the border area was not mentioned, a propaganda photo in which he was seen sitting with a Tibetan couple in traditional Lhoka attire conjecturally indicates that he has visited Tsona county in Lhoka prefecture which shares border with Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. His visit was seen as rare and unusual because Tibet-related inspection and assessments are usually conducted by chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and UFWD, two parallel Party-state organs that manage ethnic and religious issues.

Furthermore, Ding Yexian, Deputy Secretary of the TAR Party Committee who oversees the stability maintenance in the TAR, was seen in Lhasa despite his official transfer announcement in early July (Tseten 2020). It has now become clear that Beijing withheld his transfer for a couple of reasons. First, Ding was needed in the TAR during Wang Yi's visit to formally show him around on how stability maintenance

measures are being implemented. Ding was also seen accompanying Gyaltsen Norbu, China's handpicked 11th Panchen Lama, during the latter's visit to the TAR in July. Second and more importantly, the TAR Party leadership needed Ding's expertise in the field of stability maintenance and development to lay the groundwork for the seventh TWF. In the same manner, we could argue that Wang Yang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo and the Chairman of the CPPCC, visited the TAR in early July (Xinhua 2020). This is followed by a visit of the Politburo member and Vice Premier Hu Chunhua to the TAR in early August to assess the poverty alleviation program (Xinhua 2020). This too had largely paved the way for the Party leadership in laying the groundwork for the seventh TWF. The seventh TWF laid out ten "musts" (Xinhua 2020) for the Party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era at least for the next five years. However, some strategies outlined in ten "musts" need a deeper analysis given its far-reaching implications.

Ethnic Autonomy Policy

Following the widespread protests on the Tibetan Plateau in 2008[3] and Xinjiang in 2009, scholars and officials in China started to debate the efficacy of existing minority policy which is based on the Soviet model of ethnic management. But one should note that the People's Republic of China (PRC) didn't immitate Soviet's fundamental ethnic policy of "the right of secession" - which means self-determination - as their ethnic policy, instead it was replaced by "equality" and "regional autonomy".

The scholarly debate largely revolved around two distinct views: reform vs status quo. A group that holds the first view, including Ma Rong of Peking University, who is a leading scholar on China's ethnic issue and Hu Angang, an influential policy adviser from Tsinghua University discussed about reform measures. Ma called for "de-politicization"

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3. Unlike other Tibetan areas where sporadic protests occurred, there is no reported case of protests in Gyalthang in Dechen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan province. Eric D. Mortensen has argued that "Tibetans in Gyalthang genuinely appreciate being part of China and enjoy their dual Tibetan and Chinese identities. Gyalthang is in the process of being quite "successfully" assimilated into China" (Mortensen 2016).

of the "nationality/minzu issues" and instead emphasizes on cultural pluralism. Hu, similarly "promotes the intermingling of all groups as a single body to advance the prosperity and to develop a great rejuvenation of the single unity of the Chinese nation" (Rong 2017, 1-15).

The second view is an antithesis of the first and basically rejected the reform measures such as "melting pot" and "second generation ethnic policy" suggested by Ma and Hu respectively. In other words, a group that holds the second view, including a highly respected and influential Mongolian scholar Hao Shiyuan, who is believed to be instrumental in shaping the existing ethnic policy discourse, defended the status quo and believed in occasional perfecting of the existing policies rather than complete overhaul (Leibold 2013, 22-25). Such open, public debate on a sensitive issue once deemed taboo is unprecedented and in fact first of its kind since the reform era.

Notwithstanding the debate surrounding an overhaul in the system of regional autonomy, the nucleus of China's minority policy, in recent academic debate has been downplayed by Xi Jinping. In his speech at the seventh TWF, Xi said, "Practice has fully proved that the Party Central Committee's policies on Tibet work are completely correct, and that Tibet's sustained, stable and rapid development is an important contribution to the overall work of the Party and the country" (Xinhua 2020). In fact, Xi made a similar statement at the Central Ethnic Work Conference held in September 2014 (Xinhua 2014). In other words, China's minority policy of "equality" and "regional autonomy" (Rong 2006, 92-106) has remain unchanged despite policy debate. However, some policies proposed by Chinese scholars are being implemented in Tibet. China's lack of interest for change in minority policy could be inconclusively linked to deeply entrenched vested interest of millions of officials associated with "anti-separatism" bureaucracies such as the UFWD. Baba Phuntsok Wangyal wrote in one of his letters to President Hu Jintao dated 29 October, 2004, "these people live on anti-separatism, are promoted due to anti-separatism, and they hit the jackpot by anti-separatism"… He further wrote that, "the longer the Dalai Lama keeps on staying abroad, and the bigger his influence, the more long-lasting the period of high ranks and great wealth for those

anti-separatist groups; on the contrary, when the Dalai Lama restores relations with the Central Government, these people will be terrified, tense and lose their jobs" (Wangyal 2007, 78).

On the contrary, Ma Rong acknowledges that vested interest of these officials will be on stake if changes are made, but he argues that reform should be carefully made considering the sentiments and interest of individuals or groups who benefit from the present system. Furthermore, paramount importance should be placed on discussions among scholars and government officers who are associated with ethnic institutions that will be helpful to reach on a consensus for policy adjustment (Rong 2006, 107).

Similarly, thousands of middle ranking Chinese cadres formally called Aid-Tibet cadres (ATC) from inland Chinese provinces who are assigned senior political positions in the TAR-level Party and Government departments under the Aid-Tibet program (ATP) would certainly resist any change in Tibet policy. The reason behind is this, since its official launch at the third TWF in 1994, the ATP has linked the entire TAR to China in terms of infrastructure and tourism projects worth billions of US dollars (Jingan 2019). For example, 31.7 billion yuan has financed over 9,900 projects in Tibet in the first six batches of the ATP and nearly 6,000 Aid-Tibet cadres were sent from all parts of China, with 1,195 cadres arrived in Tibet as the seventh batch (Xinhua 2013). This involves a large amount of money invested by the assisting provinces, central ministries and state-owned enterprises. These powerful stakeholders monitor their projects through ATCs who receive quick promotion, which is usually not the case if they were not assigned to work in the TAR.

Normally each cadre would sign a three-year contract to work in Tibet (Huang 1995, 189). More than a thousand cadres arrive in Tibet every three years with hundreds more arriving annually on shorter *ad hoc* assignments. Each TAR municipality and prefecture has at least two inland China provinces/municipalities providing assistance in the form of major new infrastructure projects and the upgrading of governance and technical service skills (Xinhua 2020). This way the ATP has become

a sort of career advancement platform for the ATCs and moneymaking machine for other powerful stakeholders.

Renewed Emphasis on Patriotic Education

In his speech at the seventh TWF, Xi said, "we must attach importance to strengthening ideological and political education in schools, put the spirit of patriotism throughout the entire process of school education at all levels and types, sow the seeds of loving China in the depths of the hears of every teenager" (Xinhua 2020). This could be seen as China's growing sense of insecurity concerning younger generation of Tibetans who are growing up under the Chinese government's education system. The Chinese authorities believe that the young Tibetans are being under the "negative influence of religion" and therefore need to undergo political education to correct their political thinking. This seems to be why Chinese government has been issuing a number of administrative diktats intended to punish parents who would allow their children to engage in "any superstitious or religious activity" (HRW 2019). A latest report suggests that patriotic education drive under Xi has started to implement in the Tibetan schools and classes in Chinese cities "urging" students to feel the benevolence of the Party and love the Party (ICT 2021).

The patriotic education campaign has evolved over time since it was first launched in the TAR in May 1996. The campaign was initially aimed squarely at religious professionals in response to the pro-independence protests of late 1980s in Lhasa led by monks and nuns (Barnett 2012, 66-69). Under this campaign, monks and nuns were required to undergo intensive three months patriotic education designed to "thoroughly eradicate the Dalai splittist forces influences" and demand a written statement of their loyalty to the Party-state and denunciation of the Dalai Lama. The drive was carried out under the supervision of work teams based in the monasteries and nunneries (TIN 1998, 2-7).

China's growing sense of insecurity can best be illustrated by a series of protests in the recent history of Sino-Tibetan relationship. The protests in the mid-1980s were largely confined to the TAR and those who took part in these protests mainly belonged to conservative or traditionalist,

not having been influenced by Marxist ideology (Barnett 2009, 7-11). In contrast, the 2008 protests were much wider in scale in terms of geography and involved people from all sections of society, including students and intellectuals. It is stated that more than fifty percent of the 2008 protests were dominated by lay people from rural areas in which 17 out of initially 95 reported incidents were staged by students of Nationality Universities (Barnett 2009, 11-13).

Unlike the previous wave of protests where people called for independence, the slogans of 2008 protests and banners displayed were principally on one demand -- the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet (Barnett 2009, 10). Similarly, the most common slogan and testimonies of the self-immolation protests is the return of the Dalai Lama (ICT n.d.), and strikingly 26 of them were of the age of eighteen or below (ICT 2019). Although the slogan of the return of the Dalai Lama can be put into different interpretations, what this clearly suggests is that the protests were not solely driven by socio-economic disparity rather it addresses the larger question surrounding Tibetan nationalism and identity (Shakya 2012, 23-24). Tsering Topgyal has argued that:

> The Chinese invasion and policies have made Tibetan national identity the principal locus of allegiance today. In fact, the greater the Chinese repression and efforts to undermine their identity, the stronger the Tibetan consciousness of that identity and determination to protect it will be (Topgyal 2016, 117).

Strengthening Ethnic Unity

In both Western and China's ethnic studies literatures, ethnic intermarriage is an important indicator to measure the success of ethnic integration (Jian 2017). Lack of intermarriage between Han and minorities has remained the basis of ethnic discourse in contemporary China. Ma Rong, for instance, harbors a view that the lack of social cohesion could be because of relatively low rate of Han/minority intermarriages, especially between Han and religious minorities like Uighur Muslim, a significant ethnic minority in terms of conflict potential (Leibold 2013, 15-16)

At the seventh TWF, Xi Jinping emphasized in ten "musts" the importance of "strengthening ethnic unity as Tibet's work." In Chinese context, one

simple way to achieve ethnic unity is through ethnic intermarriage. The initiative of state-encouraged ethnic intermarriage is seen in Tibet and Xinjiang. Chen Quanguo, former Party Secretary of the TAR, promoted an initiative of Han-Tibetan intermarriage through a symposium held in Lhasa in 2014 (ICT 2014). Chen stressed at the symposium that "to promote fraternal ethnic intermarriage as an important starting point to promote the great unity of all ethnic groups in Tibet." Chen even honored the intermarried couples and used a Tibetan proverb "love each other like tea and salt" to portray Tibetan and Han Chinese intermarriage as a social and natural integration (ICT 2014). This proverb can be best interpreted in this way. What happens if you add salt to tea? The tea tastes a little salty, but you don't see salt anymore. The salt dissolves in the tea. This apparently is an act of Tibetans "fusion" and "mingling" into Chinese

Comparing it to assimilation strategy of colonial era, Tsering Woeser who usually go by her second name alone has wrote that China's policy of intermarriage between Tibetans and Han Chinese with the sole purpose of elimination of their ethnic identity, language, religion and culture is unacceptable. Woeser, who is married to a prominent Han Chinese writer Wang Lixiong rather believes in "mutual fusion" (Woeser 2015). It is reported that the policies of state-initiated intermarriage in Xinjiang is similar to that of the TAR. In Xinjiang, the intermarried family would get socio-economic incentives, including priority consideration for housing or government jobs and free school education for their children (Wong 2014).

According to the official report cited in the *Washington Post*, mixed marriages in the TAR have increased annually by double-digit for the past five years, from 666 couples in 2008 to 4,795 couples in 2013 (Wan and Yangjingjing 2014). A research suggests that by using the proportion of mono-ethnic households as an index, the TAR, which accounts for 95.5 percent of Tibetans, while Hans consisted of 3.7 percent and other ethnic groups 0.8 percent of the total population in the 1990 has zero percentage in ethnic intermarriages between 2000 and 2010 (Jian 2017, 8-10). Although these data fail to provide a larger picture of state-initiated ethnic intermarriage, but it can be used to measure

the degree of interaction between different ethnic groups in the TAR (Jian 2017, 2-4).

Historically, there were more Han-Tibetan intermarriages in eastern Tibetan regions (Rong 2001, 19)[4] than in the present TAR. A recent study shows that Han-Tibetan intermarriages were increasingly accepted in Labrang Township in Gansu Province and that the number of Han-Tibetan intermarriages nearly tripled from 1978 to 2000 (Tang and He 2010, 29), which is likely because of the fact that Tibetans in Labrang has been living in close proximity with other ethnic groups, including Han Chinese in Gansu Province.

Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism

The sinicization concept was initially used by scholars as an academic response to a Christian problem in 2012. It immediately caught the attention of Chinese leadership and put into use as an official discourse at the Central United Front Work Conference held in May 2015. The concept was later elaborated by Xi Jinping at the Central Conference on Religious Work held in April 2016 (Chang 2018, 39-41). Since then, the sinicization has become a new guiding principle on China's management of religions in the new era. At the same conference, Xi Jinping also called for the need to manage religions according to the rule of law (Madsen 2019). Although the term sinicization appears to be a new slogan, but the rule of law is in existence since the time of Jiang Zemin (Leung 2005, 907-910). However, the rule of law in the Chinese context is rule by law where the Party-state uses law as a political means to control and manipulate every aspect of society, including religion that is perceived as a potential threat to the state's security. Since Xi took power, China introduced a number of laws, including the National Security Law in 2015, the Counter Terrorism Law in 2016, the Foreign NGO Law in January in 2017, and the Cyber Security Law in 2017. These laws are linked to state security. For example, under the ambiguous 2016 counter terrorism law, elements such as 'distorted religious teachings' are deemed as the 'ideological basis' of terrorism or extremism (ICT & FIDH 2016).

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4. This author has seen the revised version of the article which doesn't have the name of the author and publication details.

Under the pretext of these laws, the Party tightens its control measures in monasteries and religious institutions. For instance, in 2016 the Chinese authorities carried out mass demolition and evictions of monks and nuns from two major Buddhist institutions situated in Tibetan areas in Sichuan province (HRW 2017), making it effectively easier to control. This was followed by complete change in the "Management Committee" of Larung Gar Buddhist Institute. The Party appointed six Tibetan party cadres in the Institute's key management positions, including the director, a position previously held by Ani Mumtso, niece of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok who was the founder of the Institute (Gan 2017). The decision was apparently made at the sixth TWF in 2015 and the second National Work Conference on Religion in 2016 to strengthen and expand the Party control in day-to-day management of the Institute. The Party also created a supervisor position (Caiyu 2019) to further expand and strengthen the existing control mechanisms intended to guide "religion to adapt to socialism". In the latest development, supervisors are required in monasteries and religious institutions to supervise the "Management Committees". The emergence of supervisors appears to be the outcome of China's revised regulations on religion adopted in 2017. It is in these sense that the 2016 religious conference is seen as the beginning of the CCP's new campaign to tighten its grip on the religious community (ucanews 2016).

The latest regulation titled "Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups" (China Law Translate 2020), is designed to restrict the growing influence of religion and religious activities both inside China and overseas in accordance with the Chinese laws. Although there is no clear evidence to suggest that the closure of Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom, an international center founded by Khenpo (abbot) Sodhargye of Larung Gar (ICT 2020) was carried under the effects of the regulation, but his growing international prominence is certainly not to be overlooked. We might argue that this could be a new beginning of the CCP's campaign against the overseas religious institutions and actives. The regulation also allows the reduction of religious groups deemed "illegal" (Baiming 2020) and extends its control over religious personnel, finance of religious institutions and monasteries. A similar regulation was issued in the TAR in 2018 that requires religious professionals to

unswervingly uphold four "musts", a set of rules intended to secure allegiance from monks and nuns to guide them to become vanguard of ethnic unity (Tseten 2018). The agendas outlined in the 2016 conference (Chang 2018, 41) are reasserted at the 19th Party Congress held in October 2017, making them guiding principles on religion under Xi. Zhang Yijiong, an executive deputy head of the Central UFWD, reiterated the Party line about the Dalai Lama being "a leader of a separatist group that is engaging in separatist activities" and briefly touched on Tibetan Buddhism during a press briefing on October 21 on the sidelines of the 19th Party Congress (Reuters 2017). Zhang said Tibetan Buddhism was a special religion "born in our ancient China" and has "Chinese orientation". Bhuchung K Tsering argues, Zhang by giving this statement "he might be saying this to lay the ground for legitimizing the Chinese Government's interference in Tibetan Buddhism" and "his utterance that Tibetan Buddhism has Chinese-orientation lays bare China's political agenda of wanting to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism and make it Chinese" (Tsering 2017).

The UFWD has gained enormous importance under Xi Jinping. Zhang's statement on religion obliquely illustrates its growing importance in the Party's management of religious work. During his first term, Xi elevated the UFWD to a new height by setting up a Leading Small Group on the UFWD (Tseten 2015). In his second term, which is supposed to end in 2022, but abolition of presidential term limit and with no clear line of succession laid bare his intention to stay in power for at least another five years (Lam 2020), Xi has reorganized the department by creating three new bureaus over the existing nine (Joske 2019). Two out of three new bureaus (Eleventh and Twelfth Bureaus) are assigned for religious affairs work given the gravity of religious issue. The increasing importance was seen in 2018 when the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) was absorbed into the UFWD as its internal bureau (Zhicheng 2018), ostensibly to ensure tighter Party control over religious work. This absorption "has actually deprives[sic] religious actors of a key broker, especially at the local level" (Doyon 2018).

The CPP's founding ideology on religion premised on Marxist materialistic theory, in which strong emphasis has been placed on the idea that believers

of religion will gradually shun their beliefs and religion will inevitably disappear under the socialist paradise, has remain unchanged (Batke 2017). In fact, the Party couldn't outright abandon its Marxist ideology. Sinicization of religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, therefore is an ideological replacement in this fast-evolving religious ecology.

Conclusion

As I have discussed, China's policies in Tibet over the course of four decades has been shaped by twin policies, which emphasizes on top-down economic growth through state subsidies and investments and virulent public denunciation of the Dalai Lama, while maintaining a tight control over the religious practice and teaching, a cornerstone of Tibetan cultural identity. Robert Barnett has illustrated on why and how the Chinese state considers "religious professionals", most notably the Dalai Lama as antagonistic and threat to social stability in Tibet. In response to this threat perception, Beijing changed its approach in dealing with Tibet problem from "conciliatory approach" to "regulatory approach." Since the fifth TWF, which was held two years after the 2008 protests, Beijing has upgraded security and surveillance mechanisms in Tibet compounded by existing social control and propaganda measures such as patriotic education. This has been further intensified under Xi Jinping with the institution of quixotic laws and regulations. But what is ostensibly clear from the last sixty years of Chinese rule is that, China has not only failed to win the hearts and minds of Tibetans, but their policies have backfired.

Although the TWF serves as the main policy organ for Tibet, the participation of Tibetan leaders in the forum meetings are minimal. For example, Beijing doesn't feel the need to exhibit some kind of Tibetan participation by allowing their chosen 11th Panchen Lama to attend the seventh TWF. But for the sake of representation, Pema Thinley, Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress who had previously served in various important party and government positions in the TAR, including as the deputy Party Secretary was the only Tibetan who attended the forum.

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The Post-Colonial Remembering: Tibet in India-China Conflict

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Abstract

Postcolonial nation states have a significant repertoire, which is their skill to bring about a process of forgetting, of imposing a degree of amnesia. Although as it will be seen in this paper the nation states indulge in a form of partial amnesia. Nevertheless, the amnesia caused by the nation states is because the institution of the nation state is built on the edifice of a unitary, homogenous structure that gives importance to sovereignty, state and territoriality. There is a strong tendency by the modern nation state to shape narratives and create a singular discourse, one that fits its ideology. Eventually these elements associated with the modern state flows into the daily lives of the population, getting ingrained in the dispositions of the citizens of the state. While this process is witnessed in numerous aspects of the nation state, it is seen to be strong in the narratives regarding connections, linkages and interactions between spaces within a nation or among nations. The process of erosion of these pluralities is interesting to view and comprehend, one that is present in the so-called peripheries of the nation state. These spaces are deemed as becoming a part of the modern nation. It can be best elaborated through the examples of Tibet and the Himalayas, regions that straddle between the postcolonial nation states of China and India.

Keywords: Tibet, Post-colonial, Remembering, Modern states, Narratives

Postcolonial nation states have a significant repertoire, which is their skill to bring about a process of forgetting, of imposing a degree of amnesia. Although as it will be seen in this paper the nation states indulge in a form of partial amnesia. Nevertheless, the amnesia caused by the nation states is because the institution of the nation state is built on the edifice of a unitary, homogenous structure that gives importance to sovereignty,

state and territoriality. There is a strong tendency by the modern nation state to shape narratives and create a singular discourse, one that fits its ideology. Eventually these elements associated with the modern state flows into the daily lives of the population, getting ingrained in the dispositions of the citizens of the state. While this process is witnessed in numerous aspects of the nation state, it is seen to be strong in the narratives regarding connections, linkages and interactions between spaces within a nation or among nations. The modern state is seen to be focusing on a singular connectivity that fits the framework of the modern state. An example of this can be seen with modern day diplomacy, which has various settings that at the end gives importance to a unitary relationship of states, ones mediated by diplomats. This is also witnessed in the trade and commercial linkages between countries that are monolithic and state-oriented. Significantly, these state activities are constructed as 'ahistorical' narratives, which in turn are seen to be steamrolling over multiple narratives of linkages and connections that were prevalent in the not-so-distant past.

The process of erosion of these pluralities is interesting to view and comprehend, one that is present in the so-called peripheries of the nation state. These spaces are deemed as becoming a part of the modern nation. It can be best elaborated through the examples of Tibet and the Himalayas, regions that straddle between the postcolonial nation states of China and India. After defeating the Nationalist government in the Chinese Civil War of 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong announced their intention to 'liberate' Tibet from imperialism and integrate it with the 'motherland'. The process of 'peaceful liberation' started with the Chinese invasion of the Tibetan garrison town of Chamdo, Kham in Eastern Tibet. This military action was accompanied with the Chinese communists forcing the representatives of the Tibetan government to sign the Seventeen-Point-Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in 1951 as Beijing wanted international recognition and legitimacy for their 'liberation' of Tibet. The Seventeen-Point-Agreement signed with the Lhasa government and a similar agreement that was ratified with the traditional elites in Eastern Tibet were gradualist modes of assimilating Tibet and Tibetans by China. These agreements provided a false sense of autonomy which

was only on paper, but never implemented. Article 4 in the Seventeen Point Agreement even stated that the older political system would continue, with no alteration towards the status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama (Tibet Justice Centre).

Eventually, in the 1950s, the party-state didn't uphold the Seventeen-Point-Agreement. Nor were the local agreements with the ruling elites in Eastern Tibet respected. The areas of Kham and Amdo had been incorporated into the neighbouring Chinese provinces that led to the imposition of land reforms and policies, which disturbed the traditional Tibetan way of life. In response, the Tibetans from Eastern Tibet started armed insurrections against the party-state from as early as 1952 that finally culminated in the 1959 uprising in Lhasa. The uprising was brutally crushed that led to the eventual flight of the Dalai Lama along with tens of thousands of Tibetans to India and South Asia. An important reason for the communists for not upholding the local agreements with the Tibetans was due to the transformation of Tibet into a geographical periphery of the Chinese nation-state, which had to be incorporated into the body politic of modern China. Interestingly, Tibet and Tibetans are still undergoing this process of being incorporated into the modern state of China, a process that is deeply violent, a fact that was attested to by the previous Panchen Lama in his 70,000 Character Petition written in 1962, which was addressed to the then top leadership of the CCP. He writes in his petition of how there was a massive suppression of people even in those areas where no rebellion had broken out (TIN 1997, v). Locals who had gathered to chant scriptures because of their Buddhist religion and for the happiness of mankind were also regarded as counter-revolutionaries, who were suppressed and attacked. He further mentions how cadres did not investigate and simply believed in rumours about 'rebellion is going to take place' and 'rebellion has taken place' and carried out bloody suppression and attacks (TIN 1997, v).

Creation of a Singular Narrative

A major reason for the violent incorporation of Tibet and Tibetans into China is due to the postcolonial nation-states transforming its geographical peripheries such as Tibet into spaces of security and strategy. As Professor Dawa Norbu writes how Tibet was always of

crucial importance to the dominant powers of South and East Asia in their respective strategic calculations in the past as well as the present. This was the case during the age of empires, when Tibet and the Himalayas were spaces of the 'Great Game' between British India, Tsarist Russia and Imperial China. With the British possessing a higher balance of power, they were able to turn Tibet into a buffer state between India and the powers in the north (Norbu 2008, 686). What is important is with the advent of the British in Asia and the establishment of British imperial power in the Indian subcontinent, Tibet and the Himalayas were exclusively understood through the lens of state and security that continued after the independence of India and the formation of the People's Republic of China. Prof. Norbu mentions how the strategic importance of Tibet was not lost neither to China nor to India (Norbu 2008, 685). Even India in the early 1950s saw the Himalayas as magnificent frontiers that should not be penetrated as it was the principal barrier to India (Norbu 2008, 685). The communist Chinese are seen to be perceiving Tibet as a backdoor which had to be shut if China were to achieve its national security. They framed Tibet as 'lips to the teeth' that had to be protected and with the occupation of Tibet, Communist China began to perceive Tibet, especially during the 1970s as China's 'south-west outpost against imperialism, revisionism and reaction', terms that are specific references to countries considered to China then – the USSR and India (Norbu 2008, 688).

Even the main reason for the Communist takeover of Tibet is strategic, rather than historical claims or ideological motives (Norbu 2008, 688). The communists saw Tibet purely from a strategic vision and decided to shut China's backdoor in 1950. Prof. Norbu mentions how over the years the Chinese strategic appreciation of Tibet deepened and thus any dissent from the local population was intolerable and had to be brutally suppressed. Tibet being turned into a strategic asset by China is seen with the massive development of infrastructure that has occurred on the 'roof of the world'. No sooner had the PLA troops entered Eastern Tibet then they began building roads. Strategic development continued in Tibet for more than two decades, and certainly the most spectacular aspect of the overall development in Tibet from 1950 to 1976 has been strategic or military-oriented. This is not to deny the economic aspect;

but it is secondary; it is merely to point out a simple fact, often concealed and ignored, that strategic development overshadows all other aspects of the exported revolution in Tibet. Most of the economic assistance that China claims to have rendered Tibet has actually gone into strategic road building (Norbu 2008, 688). The Chinese communists realized that the first task of liberation was not social reform or economic development but it was strategic development. The massive construction of strategic roads, bridges in Tibet in the 1950s was to accelerate the process of integrating Tibet into the motherland (Norbu 2008, 689). Immediately after the conquest of Tibet in 1951, the Chinese began constructing highways that would link Tibet with China for the first time in history. Such developments largely enabled the PLA to be militarily ready for the 1962 border war with India (Norbu 2008, 689).

Tibet and the Himalayan region were viewed purely in strategic terms by China as well as India. Interestingly, along with the securitization of the geographic spaces there was also a process of converting the communities present in the region into stereotypical pawns of security and strategy. These conversions of the land and the people by the postcolonial nation states are still an ongoing process that consists of a dual approach. However, these approaches should not be seen as being fixed and instead should be viewed as 'ideal types' as propounded by the German sociologist Max Weber. Still, it is pertinent to elaborate the duality that is present. On one level, the communities are viewed as 'suspects' that need to be monitored, controlled and curbed by the nation state as they are not yet a part of the nation state. While the other view turns them into the 'first line of defense' for the nation. In 2017, President Xi Jinping evoked this narrative when in a letter to a Tibetan family he asked them to help safeguard the border. Xi was writing in response to a letter written by a Tibetan family who are based in the bordering village of Yumai in Lhunze county, Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) that borders with India and Bhutan. The family was praised by Xi Jinping in their decades-long efforts to 'protect the Chinese territory' (Shen 2017). The Tibetan family is assumed to have written to Xi about their community of 32 residents and their efforts towards helping China maintain control over the territory. The village head in 2015 had mentioned that Yumai would be occupied by India if the family had decided to leave (Shen 2017).

While the above narrative can be simply termed as a choreographed event by the Chinese state, it does bring to the forefront how Beijing utilizes the local Tibetan population in efforts to expand its sovereignty. Most recently, the Chinese appointed Panchen Rinpoche had also brought up this notion of people transformed into the 'first line of defense' when on a tour to the TAR he visited a township in Yadong county that is near the border with India. While interacting with a local driver he specifically stressed on the need for the individual to 'lead people in guarding the border well' (Xinhua 2020). This example also reflects the idea of turning the population into agents of security for the nation state which was a strategy that had been adopted by the Manchu general Zhao Erfeng in 1910 after his invasion of Lhasa. His troops then undertook the subjugation of Poyul, a region located north of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) where Zhao had invited Chinese settlers to come and settle in Zayul, near Rima on the Tibetan side of the Lohit valley (Arpi 2015).

The Nation State and Plural Narratives

The narrative of the modern postcolonial nation state in Tibet and the Himalayas is seen to be singular and moving towards homogeneity. The new narratives are seen to have apparently replaced the multiple, prosaic and dynamic narratives and interactions that flourished in these spaces. At present, these interactions are in the form of bilateral or multilateral connections among states. An example of this can be the trade and commercial ties between India and China, which takes place through the Himalayan passes. What is fascinating is how both countries in an attempt to strengthen their relationship are seen to be highlighting the ancient silk trade route that was present between China and India. The spread of Buddhism from India to China is also invoked in a similar manner by both countries to boost their modern-day relationship. While these historical connections between both India and China are important, they are seen to be framed as singular instances of interactions in the region and given more importance that in a way dilutes the plural connectivity that existed before. A form of trade that is not remembered is the wool trade that flourished earlier between Tibet and the Indian sub-continent.

During the heydays of the wool trade, the frontier town of Kalimpong assumed importance as it was the dry entrepot for the traders from Tibet and India. The mule caravan from Tibet used to bring their goods; mostly wool that were stored in ten giant go-downs in the Himalayan town in the 1940s-50s (Banerjee 2020, 104). The major reason for Kalimpong's choice over neighbouring Sikkim for trade and commerce with Tibet was due to the proximity of the all-weather Jelep La pass near the frontier town. Nathula was shut for five months during winters (Banerjee 2020, 114). The commercial interaction was much active from both sides, which was seen with Indian traders in the 1950s opening twenty shops in the town of Dromo (Ch.Yatung) in the Chumbi valley, Tibet (Banerjee 2020, 114). This decentralized dynamic commercial interaction came to an end after the invasion of Tibet and subsequent escape of the Dalai Lama from Tibet followed by tens of thousands of Tibetan refugees into South Asia that automatically led to a decrease in trade through Kalimpong. Interactions took place along the other Himalayan border passes as seen with trade and pilgrimage between Nepal and Tibet. Nepali merchants from Humla and Darchula laboured over the mountains with bags of rice and spices strapped to snaking goat trains, while Tibetan farmers journeyed in both directions, trekking out their barley and salt to return with Indian spices and Nepali fabric. Hindu pilgrims from the south and Tibetans from eastern Tibet came for pilgrimage to Mount Kailash (Bruno 2019, 47). These plural interactions finally ended with the Sino-Indian war that altered the Indo-Tibet borders for good. These decentralized interactions between Tibet and South Asia were replaced with militarization of the borderlands, which led to the imposition of a homogenous narrative of security-strategy in Tibet and the Himalayas.

The securitization of the Himalayan spaces converted these regions into strategic zones to be controlled by the modern nation states. The Himalayas as mentioned earlier are viewed from a rather utilitarian perspective by these nation states that eventually dilutes the agency of the local communities. Furthermore, the infusion of 'security' in these spaces has also transformed the relationship of these communities with others, which in many cases has led to newer conflicts shaped by the discourse of the nation state. The modern states' domination over

the Himalayan spaces provided them with an acute strategic advantage over the rival nation. This narrative fits in the conflict between India and China that is played out in Tibet and the larger Himalayas. Hence, the protracted contest becomes the dominant or the 'only' lens through which the Himalayas are seen and comprehended. One sees this in the 'oft-cited' words of Chairman Mao, who termed Tibet as the palm of China, with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh as the five fingers. Anyone controlling the palm and the five fingers would provide that country with the needed advantage during conflict. This was noticed in the 2017 Doklam issue between India, Bhutan and China. The Indian soldiers prevented the Chinese from expanding their infrastructure in the Doklam plateau as a Chinese build-up would have given strategic advantage to the PLA in the event of war with India. A control over the Doklam plateau would have provided the Chinese with a bird's eye view over the Siliguri corridor, the narrow strip of land that connects north-east India with the rest of the nation. The 2020 conflict between India and China in the Galwan valley which is located between disputed Aksai Chin and Ladakh needs to be comprehended along strategic reasons as control over the area is important for both countries. The Galwan river in the region is the highest ridge line that overlooks the Daulat Beg Oldi road, posing a direct threat to the highway's security. It is an essential arterial road for India to maintain its security presence in this part of the Himalayas. A control over the Galwan valley by China can keep India's claims on the Aksai Chin plateau in check (Duhalde et al 2020).

Controlling the Himalayas has always been a 'mission' for these modern-day nation states as it will provide them with leverage over the other nation during times of conflict. Thus, the Himalayas have been the playground for the powerful empires since the time of the 'Great Game', a legacy that has been carried forward in the interactions between India and China. Through this narrative, the Himalayas are turned into spaces meant for the security of the competing countries that affects the consciousness of the ruling elite in these modern states. Securitization of the Himalayas by these countries are seen to be translated into official policies that takes the form of infrastructural buildup and other features of governance. It was due to the infrastructural buildup by

India near the Galwan valley, Ladakh that raised alarms in Beijing as Indian security buildup poses a direct threat to China's Xinjiang-Tibet highway, which is a strategic artery of Beijing in the region. China also saw India's infrastructural buildup as threatening the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship program of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) between China and Pakistan. Through these examples, it is clear that both India and China paint the Himalayan spaces in a singular colour of security that is state-centric, diluting the polychromatic nature of the region.

Remembering the Multiple Narratives

The narrative from the nation states regarding the Himalayas are seen to be divorcing the region from a social, people-centric understanding of spaces as well as from multiple pasts. The 2017 Doklam crisis between India, Bhutan and China that lasted for around 73 days is a good example to understand the dynamic past of a region. Doklam is the Indian name and way of pronouncing Drok-lam, Tibetan for 'nomad's path', where herders used to graze their cattle. It is part of a narrow valley called Dromo in Tibet, which was one of the important trade routes between India and Tibet with the hamlet of Dromo becoming the staging post for all goods entering and leaving Tibet. Its importance is understood from the fact that the area had four different names, varying with the people using it – for British India it was the Chumbi valley, for Newar merchants from Nepal it was Shar Zingma and for the Chinese it was Yatung, now written as Yadong (Shakya 2017). During the Dalai Lama's rule in Tibet, the area was administered from Phari dzong inside Tibet and was divided into upper Dromo and lower Dromo. The county administrators of the region were directly appointed by the Lhasa government (Shakya 2017). The erstwhile ruling dynasty of Sikkim also came from Dromo where they maintained a summer palace (Banerjee 2020, 35). Thus, before the region became a security hotspot for India and China, it was teeming with multiple actors indulging in a host of socio-economic and political practices. The political history of the region is much diverse and dynamic with the region coming under the influences of the Sikkimese, Bhutanese and the Tibetans. It was from Dromo that the Tibetans and Mongolians in the 1600s had attacked the Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the hierarch of the Drukpa Kagyu

school and founder of the kingdom of Bhutan. In the early 1900s, an enclave in Drok-lam was granted by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Kazi Ugyen Dorje, an important political figure in Bhutan, who served as the intermediary between Tibet and British India (Shakya 2017). The Kazi had hosted the Dalai Lama, when he was forced into exile after the Qing invasion of Lhasa and pleased with the Kazi's hospitality and services, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had granted the nomad's path to the Bhutanese official.

The Himalayas are sites filled with pasts that are diverse and multiple, which the modern nation state does not want to remember in the present period. A reason for bringing this amnesia is the postcolonial nation states and their rather uniform conception of social realities. These modern entities are unable to comprehend the diverse realities in the Himalayan spaces as they lack the required epistemic tools to uncover the layers of plurality that are present in the Tibetan regions. On the other hand, a reason for forgetting might be the fear that these nation states have from the alternative, competing forms of sovereignties, legitimacy and territorialities that is still active in Tibet and the Himalayan regions. Hence the nation states that have encroached in the Himalayas are seen to be deliberately carrying out a project of suppressing these political memories as they all pose a challenge. The PRC after crushing the 1959 Tibetan uprising initiated a wiping out of the older political realities inside Tibet. The communist Chinese delegitimized the traditional Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama through attacking the older ruling elites, replacing the earlier bureaucratic structures and dismantling the Buddhist ideology that had been the principle method of exercising sovereignty by the former ruling groups. This was even implemented when the Tibetan uprising was brutally crushed by the PLA inside Tibet, which is highlighted by the 10th Panchen Lama in his 70,000 Character Petition of 1962. He mentions how in places where there was no rebellion, cadres wanted to suppress people as they attacked them by falsely accusing and slandering them. Also, the Panchen Rinpoche writes how the people who were practicing their Buddhist religion were regarded as counterrevolutionaries and were attacked (TIN 1997, v).

The Tibetan leader further narrates how before the democratic reform there were more than 2,500 large, medium and small monasteries in Tibet. After the implementation of the reform, only 70 odd monasteries remained (TIN 1997, vi). The Tibetan uprising of 1959 and its brutal crushing was an opportunity that was presented to the Chinese party state to aggressively implement their radical policies and accelerate the process of assimilating Tibet and Tibetans into the Chinese nation state. In pre-1959 Tibet, the ruling ideology circulated around Tibetan Buddhism, with the Dalai Lamas holding spiritual and temporal power over the land and the people. The clergy and the monasteries were centers of power and authority, with a number of monks serving as officials in the government departments. Hence, it was this system that was attacked by the Chinese state which is critiqued by the Panchen Rinpoche, who stated that Tibet in the past had a total of 110,000 monks and nuns. Of those, possibly 10,000 fled abroad, leaving about 100,000. After "Democratic Reform", the number of monks and nuns living in the monasteries was about 7000, which is a massive reduction (TIN 1997, vi). The importance of Tibetan Buddhism to Tibetans is understood from the Panchen Rinpoche mentioning how the elimination of Buddhism, which was flourishing in Tibet is happening under the Chinese communists that was something that the Panchen and 90 percent of Tibetans will never endure (TIN 1997, vi). The communists saw Tibetan Buddhism as the fountainhead of power and sovereignty inside Tibet which was the reason for them to attack the institutions of Buddhism in the country. The attack on the Tibetan faith increased by tenfold with the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) launched by Chairman Mao and his Red Guards. The Cultural Revolution can be dubbed as the final nail in the coffin for the older memories that completely replaced the traditional Tibetan state. The modern communist state intended to completely replace the older regime, which as a process still continues inside Tibet.

There have been recent attempts by the PRC to completely replace the older state entities in Tibet, witnessed through the policies of forcing Tibetans to worship Xi Jinping and the other leaders of the CCP. The Tibetans were forced to replace the portraits of the Dalai Lama with those of President Xi in order to receive government aids. While

pictures of the Dalai Lama have been banned inside Tibet, households in far-flung areas have generally been able to continue to worship the exiled Tibetan leader in private (The Observors 2019). However, from December 2018 in the Amdo county inside Tibet, the officials demanded that locals "clean up" images of the Dalai Lama in their homes, Buddhist temples and monasteries and replace them with portraits of Xi and Mao Zedong (The Observors 2019). These are the extreme steps undertaken by the postcolonial Chinese state to suppress the older sovereignties in Tibet. However, what can also be deducted from such instances is that the older, pre-modern sovereignties had not only survived but were thriving inside Tibet. This can be measured from the immense faith and devotion of the Tibetans as well as the larger Himalayan Buddhist population towards their lamas, especially the Dalai Lama. Since 2009, there have been 156 self-immolations in Tibet, many of which were committed in the name of religious freedom and for the return of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama from exile (Wang 2012). However, what is also of much interest is to see the presence of an interaction and a dialogue between the modern nation state and the older systems of sovereignties in the Himalayan spaces. The narrative has not always been about a decimation of the pre-modern political systems. There are immense instances of the modern states attempting to incorporate the pre-modern institutions of authority and power, a process that still continues.

Such an interaction between the pre-modern and the modern is replete throughout the Himalayas, assuming different forms and ideas. Professor Charles Ramble in his groundbreaking ethnographic research on the village of Te in Mustang, Nepal mentions about how the Panchayat System implemented in 1962 resulted in the vanishing of the older local political structures in many parts of Nepal (Ramble 2008, 263). Under the modern system, the traditional rural elites in the form of clan chiefs and hereditary headmen were either sidelined into ceremonial functions or retained their power by securing offices within the new regime. This accommodation of the earlier ruling elites into the new structures of power is an effective mode of co-opting as adopted by the new modern states. One sees this being practiced by the communist Chinese through the policy of the United Front, where a number of Tibetan aristocrats and religious leaders including reincarnate lamas

have been given membership in the local legislative bodies and in the local advisory institutions known as the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The modern states through institutional mechanisms are seen to be engaged in a dialogue with the pre-modern power entities. A similar mechanism is present in democratic India, where traditional ruling elites from the Himalayas have been incorporated in the legislative bodies or other institutions of governance. A good example is the case of Bakula Rinpoche of Ladakh (Wangchuk 2017). The highly eminent Rinpoche was 19th of his line, born in 1917 in Ladakh and had been educated in the great monastic universities in Lhasa, Tibet before the land was invaded by China. He was active in post 1947 Indian politics, with him being elected as a member of the state assembly and also of the Union Parliament. However, it was his stint as the Ambassador to Mongolia, through which he was able to revive Buddhism in that country (Wangchuk 2017).

Bakula Rinpoche was also a minister of Ladakh affairs for ten years in the Jammu and Kashmir government and also the first member of parliament from Ladakh (Bhalla 2020). Thus, the example of Bakula Rinpoche helps in understanding how the modern nation state has interacted with the traditional sovereignties in the Himalayas. This interaction however can be seen as one where incorporation and resistance are taking place at the same time. Prof. Ramble writes about this with regard to areas such as South Mustang in Nepal where the archaic local forms of sovereignties survived and retained more relevance with regard to everyday affairs in comparison to the institutions of the modern state. He writes how in many regions, there is the presence of two parallel power structures as seen in the village of Te in South Mustang. Here, the village headmen and the constables are given more authority while the Nepali state appointed village development committees is given a nominal position. The real sovereignty lies with the traditional state apparatus as seen in Te as well as in other Himalayan regions (Ramble 2008, 263). Still, this process is much dependent on the power and 'reach' of the modern state, with a few postcolonial nations having stronger monopoly over power. Under the condition of postcoloniality, it is seen that remembering of older sovereignties are strong political acts, with the modern states controlling the degrees of remembering and thus in the process imposing partial amnesia.

In the case of India and China, which are relatively young postcolonial states, the peripheral regions like Tibet and the Himalayas have not fully subsumed in the strait-jacket of the nation state. On the other hand, the older political entities are actively affecting the relationship between the modern states of India and China. Tibet and the Himalayas are converted into political boundaries for both nations leading towards much contestation and competition between the countries over the region. The border disputes between India and China are directly linked to Tibet as prior to 1951, it was the India-Tibet border. For postcolonial states, territory is sacred and is tied to its existence. It is the foundation on which the nation states existence is tied and thus it needs to be coveted and defended. Seen in the context of India and China, the Himalayas are the coveted territories, which have always been spaces occupied by the 'other' communities who do not belong to the ruling groups at the center. Still, it is their land and territory that is claimed and contested by the centers, leading to much conflict between them. The roots of conflict need to be traced to the memories of the inhabitants residing in these contested spaces.

The Chinese claims over Tawang and much of the other territories in the Himalayas are based on Tibetan historical documents, which are memories deeply embedded in these spaces, even though Tawang had been incorporated in British India during the 1914 Simla Conference that gave birth to the McMahon Line. On the other hand, till 1951 the Lhasa government exercised jurisdiction over the area. These were in the form of taxes collected by officials appointed from Lhasa and who were stationed in Tsona district, north of the McMahon Line. The forms of sovereignties during the pre-nation state phase in the Himalayas also circulated in the form of the Buddhist linkages centered around the reincarnate lamas, especially the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas. These sovereignties are based on cultural and religious norms as described by Susanne Rudolph (Rudolph 1987, 736). According to Rudolph, ritual sovereignties entail minimum control over a region by a dominant power. In these regions one can see the presence of self-regulating groups, which had certain links to the centers through giving tributes or through a weakly specified ritual sovereignty (Rudolph 1987, 736).

The Himalayan spaces such as Tawang saw Lhasa as their cultural center and also emulated certain practices followed by the ruling elites in the Tibetan capital. Ritual sovereignties also need to be seen through cultural activities, symbols and processes that in the absence of instrumental mechanism nevertheless creates a domain, a realm (Rudolph 1987, 740). One sees this in the form of a Buddhist cosmological world in the Himalayan region where Lhasa and other Tibetan reincarnates used to exercise much ritual sovereignty in the area. Another way of understanding ritual sovereignty in the Himalayas is through the idea of a "galactic polity" as propounded by Stanley Tambiah in which the 'mandala' plays an important role. The 'mandala' has a core and an enclosing element. Thus, there is a kingdom which is the governing center with less important replicas gravitating around it. The center serves as a source of civilization (Lopes 2008, 48). The traditional Tibetan state or the Ganden Phodrang government that was inaugurated by the Fifth Dalai Lama from 1642 till its dissolution in the 1950s by the Chinese invasion is seen to be based on the notion of ritual sovereignty, with the Tibetan state and especially the institution of the Dalai Lama becoming the center of the mandala. Through a ritualization of activities, the Tibetan state was strengthened, for instance, the Fifth Dalai Lama created a series of festivals and ceremonies which all had deep ritualistic value. Similarly, the palace of the Dalai Lama, the Potala and the government organization as a whole were conceived as mandalas, which in the context of Tibetan Buddhism can be seen as a prime organizing principle of ritual space (Lopes 2008, 48).

Ritual sovereignty is seen to be exercising legitimacy through 'performance', where it maintains a centrality of performance in the different structures of government. Hence, in most cases the central government does not directly administer the peripheral regions and leaves it to expressive forms such as the spectacle and the court ceremonies through which there is a degree of governance exercised (Lopes 2008, 48). Ana Christina Lopes in her anthropological work gives importance to the figure of the Fifth Dalai Lama who is seen to be creating through his writings, decrees and so forth a form of sovereignty. For instance, in 1643, the Fifth Dalai Lama wrote an official history of Tibet, which was composed at the request of Gushri Khan (Lopes 2008, 49). Through

these writings the Fifth Dalai Lama is seen to be trying to legitimize his rule as well as the Ganden Phodrang government (Lopes 2008, 50). Through symbols, rituals and through connecting to a past, the Fifth Dalai Lama initiated a process of legitimizing the establishment of his government. He is seen to be invoking mythical, semi-mythical and historical figures in the creation of a public image for himself and the institution of the Dalai Lama. A few of these figures and symbols were associated with Avalokiteshwara, Songtsen Gampo, Padmasambava and Atisha Dipamkara (Lopes 2008, 56). Hence, we see the presence of sovereignty exercised through symbols and ideas that were created by the Fifth Dalai Lama who assumed the central position in this ritual form of sovereignty. The Great Fifth Dalai Lama brought a new centralized government through the assimilation of symbolic modalities prevalent in the Tibetan imaginary at that time (Lopes 2008, 56). Such a state formation which was prevalent in Tibet in the 15th century had not only survived but was still potent when the PRC had invaded Tibet. Interestingly, the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the dawn of the nation states did not lead to an end of the ritual sovereignty present in Tibet and the Himalayas.

Conclusion

The emergence of the newly independent postcolonial nation states of India and the establishment of the PRC is seen to have enforced the logic of the modern state in the peripheries of these new countries. Incidentally, the peripheries for both India and China are Tibet and the Himalayas where a unique form of state-hood based on ritual sovereignties were much present. These sovereignties were plural, heterogenous and polychromatic that stressed on symbolic rule among a number of technologies of governance that was prevalent in these spaces. At present, Tibet and the Himalayas have become the borders for India and China, which are deeply contested by both modern states, leading to a militarization and securitization of these spaces. However, the earlier sovereignties are seen to be much present in these spaces, which the nation states have attempted to forget, a process that still remains incomplete. On the other hand, it can be somewhat denoted that the older sovereignties and memories are still alive in these spaces as seen in the case of Tawang monastery. At present, the 17th century

Geluk monastery is located in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, one of the contested spaces between India and China. The monastery was established in the 1680s by Merab Lodro Gyatso, who received direct instructions to construct the institution from the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Tibetan religious head wanted to counter the growth of the Dukpa Kagyu school from Bhutan in the region. Therefore, one sees the presence of ritual sovereignties at play in Mon-Tawang during the period of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The abbots of Tawang monastery were sent from Drepung monastery in Lhasa.

The influence of ritual sovereignties exercised by Lhasa on Tawang increased with the Sixth Dalai Lama; Tsayang Gyatso being born in the region. Along with ritual sovereignties, Lhasa was also seen to be enjoying more concrete authority in the region as taxes from Tawang were collected by officials appointed by the Tibetan government. Interestingly, the Chinese modern state in the past has sought to legitimize its claims over the territory through invoking the ritual and concrete sovereignties that Tibet used to enjoy over Tawang. Beijing had highlighted the life and the contributions of the Sixth Dalai Lama keeping in mind his connections to Tawang, a region claimed by China as South Tibet. In current times, the monks from Tawang venture for higher studies to Drepung Gomang monastic university and also the Ganden Jangtse Monastic college in Karnataka (Banerjee 2020, 72). These monastic institutions were established by the Tibetans after they were forced into exile. They have strong linkages to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) or the Tibetan Government-in-exile especially the Department of Religion and Culture. Hence, the earlier ritual sovereignties are seen to be much active and operational in the current period when the postcolonial nation states are deeply entrenched. In conclusion, the plural connections that were present earlier in Tibet and the Himalayas are seen to be very much alive and vocal, affecting the interactions of the postcolonial nation states of India and China.

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