CHAPTER THREE

Lhasa Rebellion of 1959
Tibet was isolated until 1940s, unaffected by the social and political developments outside its polity. The political upsurges brought in by the Chinese revolution made all the difference: its impact and the Chinese interests changed the course of events in Tibet. Tibet was considered a living proof of theocracy till 1950. Unique in its own primeval and geographical setting, her social, economic and political system resembled the Middle Ages. It was therefore considered untouched by modernity.

Tibet emerged as the Vatican of Non-violence under Mahayana Buddhism with its propagation of non-violence: discarding and renouncing of armaments. The political isolation and absence of modernity left vacuum in Tibet for imperialist interest to bring into play its geo-political strategy in central Asia. Thus, by 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, Tibet became a pawn in the hands of both the British India and China, for it was sandwiched between the interests of these two powers. The Tibet Convention of 1904 and the Anglo Russian Convention of 1907 were basically aimed at making Tibet an area free from any struggle for sphere of influence and colonization. With the creation of Tibet as buffer state, the Chinese opposed any British presence in the region. According to Dawa Norbu, the Chinese always feared that the British might colonize Tibet or encourage nationalistic Tibetans to modernize and "nationalize" their country. Therefore, China curbed any exogenous source of change coming to Tibet. As far as the British were concerned, Tibet was not worth colonizing, but they were willing to modernize her up to some extent as long as Tibet was under their control.

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Between 1913-1933, the 13th Dalai Lama attempted to drag Tibet into 20th century, but was opposed by religious institution and ruling elite. The monastic community refuted Dalai Lama's attempt to modernize Tibet. This missed chance of modernization of Tibet turned the atmosphere conducive for the Chinese to get access in bribing and instigating the powerful abbots in Lhasa, since it was customary for Chinese as patron of Tibetan Buddhism to express concern over any anti-Buddhist influence interfering in the holy land.

What is intriguing is that during 1912-48, Tibetans could have easily expelled the foreigners from Tibet. The simple minded Tibetans saw their easy way of expulsing the Chinese troops from Tibet as simply the work of their faith, though it was actually made possible by the 1911 revolution following the speedy departure of the British expedition in 1904. This kind of reading of the events reaffirmed their belief in the existing value system and further strengthened their will to continue keep the door shut to any exogenous sources of change. As Dawa Norbu remarked, the absence of an exogenous source of change is not by itself an indication of the perfection of any society.

It may be possible at best to prolong the decline, if the social structure has lost its equilibrium and the value system has got degenerated. However, change is inevitable. But it should be noted that the situation of Tibet in 1950 was different. This fact is supported and acknowledged by number of books, especially those written by westerners, who spent several years in the country. According to a French

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4 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 73.
5 Ibid. p. 74.
Tibetologist, prior to Chinese invasion, "Tibet is not only an ethnic group but a civilization. The Tibetans stand distinctly free from the Chinese with whom they have nothing in common." Tibet was also one of those rare nations of the world that developed its own culture till the 20th century in complete isolation (except the original source of Buddhism) from external influences. It was a religiously active country where the Tibetans were still constructing monasteries. Every member of the nobility had a library, and artists were brought into their homes at high remuneration. The French Tibetologist remarked: "It was a civilization in no way on the decline, but on the contrary, having escaped colonialism, it continued developing along its own line."6

Till 20th century Tibet was completely isolated and untouched by external influence. Her whole world revolved around her religion (Buddhism), which had pervasive influence on the life of the people. Tibetan Buddhism had much visible and unique manifestation: prayer flags, stupas, religious monuments, and prayer wheel and stones carved with prayer's charm boxes. The most visible evidence of Buddhism was the community of monks that forms 20 to 33 percent of the male population. It shows how religion had permeated in every aspect of the Tibetan life.7

Religion and Politics in Pre-1950 Tibet

Before going into the concrete inter-relationship between politics and religion in Tibet, it is pertinent to appreciate the various elements that make up the relationship in general. Perhaps, the definition of the relation between the religion and politics attempted by Tom Grunfeld (1996) would help us in this regard to start with. This

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goes as: "a process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interests are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy."\(^8\) From this, we can derive a number of important elements, so as to find out the realm of 'the political' that 'religion' might engage.

First, politics is a process; a complex set of activities that form part of the shared existence a 'group of people'. The purpose of those activities, as noted in the definition, is essentially the making of collective decisions - the exercise of power. Our particular focus, therefore, is with the interconnections that exist between the religious life of the group and any or all of those activities, always bearing in mind that they take place within a broader social, cultural, economic and geographical context defined by the character of the group. However, there exist different dimensions of what one calls by a 'group of people'. In principle, one could be speaking of a wide spectrum ranging from small primary groups such as family units, through to the entire human race. All to a greater or lesser degree have a corporate life, containing individuals to some degree divergent in opinion or interest. All, therefore, have formal or informal 'political' processes whereby collective decisions are made.\(^9\)

Hence, it is indeed interesting to speculate how 'religion' affects family decision-making, the 'politics' of the workplace, or other groups of people. Indeed, one particular group may be defined by religious membership. And so, we might well ask that how these groups formulate collective decisions. We might then also

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ask how those patterns impinge on the way those groups engage in political processes outside the group. Studies have in fact been done on this, showing that such internal political practices do indeed affect the manner of external engagements. They also show that internal power arrangements tend to reflect patterns in the secular political world.\textsuperscript{10} All these serve to emphasize that the relationship between religion and politics is not a simple one; there are many complex features that must be taken into account.

However, 'politics' is reserved for decision-making processes among large spatial groups, collectives of people that inhabit a given local, regional or, above all, national territory. Numerous studies have focused on the contribution of religion at each of these levels. At the small end of the spectrum, they include report of the way religion intersects with the political processes of the particular villages or cities - what some call 'communal politics'.\textsuperscript{11} They are studies that look at provinces or regions; some are large and significant, sufficiently giving distinctive focus on religious and political life.\textsuperscript{12} But most common are the 'country studies' on the relationship between religion and politics in sovereign nation-states.

The Penguin dictionary of politics defines a nation as a body of people who see at least part of their identity in terms of a single communal identity with some considerable historical continuity of union, with major elements of common culture, and with a sense of geographical location at least for a good part of those who make


up the nation.\textsuperscript{13} Hence, to the extent that religion is a part of the communal identity, common culture and historical continuity, so religion and 'nation' become closely entangled to that extent at least: religion can be a means through which a nation expresses its identity and aspirations.\textsuperscript{14}

For instance, in the Untied States, the relationship between religion and the national constitution is closely related. The US constitution lays out the basic legal framework within which the state institutions operate. In doing so, it also reflects important symbolic elements and ideological preferences. This in turn raises the question of the role accorded to religious bodies in the constitution, and the extent to which its symbols and values have a religious provenance. Similar consideration can also be raised in studying the institution of the Dalai Lama.

Constitutional studies, particularly in the United States, also draw into view the relationship between religion and the judiciary, which in that country has a major responsibility for deciding constitutional issues.\textsuperscript{15} Beyond that, such a focus raises the whole question of the contribution of religion to the understanding of law. In many Islamic countries, the contribution of religion to law is very explicit.\textsuperscript{16} In numerous countries and contexts, religion and politics do indeed connect in this way. Religion and nationalism, fundamentalism and political conservatism, and, not


\textsuperscript{15} For a recent report, see R. S. Alley, ed., \textit{The Supreme Court on Church and State} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{16} J. L. Esposito, \textit{Islam and Politics} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn).
least, the political witness of those committed to liberation theology are all examples.\textsuperscript{17}

In one usage, the term 'religion' simply specifies the extant world religions such as Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity and so forth. But this begs the question: what distinguishes these 'religions' from other 'isms' like fascism or Marxism, or from magic and superstition? A more generic approach is called for and this sees religion as being defined in terms of one or more of the three related themes said to be characteristic of religion and the religious experience. These are the notions of transcendence, sacredness and ultimacy.\textsuperscript{18}

Transcendence emphasizes the religious as being associated with a supernatural reality, in the sense that within the mundane world, \textit{homo religious} "encounters powers that are impressively greater than (transcendent to) his own."\textsuperscript{19} In this way, the religious order is seen as having a pre-eminent claim over the believer and the social order of everyday life. This in turn extends to an influence over the political domain when collective decisions concerning that social order are being made.

Sacredness is the second theme, emphasized by Durkheim in his now classic distinction between the sacred and the profane. Sacred things are those that the interdictions protect and isolate; profane things are those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the former. Religious beliefs


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p. 25.
are the representations, which express the nature of sacred things and the relations they sustain, either with each other or with profane things. This view has influenced many authors. For instance, Berger argues that 'religion' should be demarcated as those systems of belief that invoke a 'sacred canopy'.

Paden also suggests that "the term religion is generally used to mean a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed sacred." To the extent that the sacred is used by people "as the organizing points of reference for defining their worlds and lives," this too entails a relationship with the social and political domains. The feeling of extraordinary power evoked by 'the sacred' compels the believer to try to order 'the profane' in a manner consistent with those greater imperatives as George Meyer remarked.

The same might also be said of the idea of religion as ultimacy. This has been propounded in terms of religion as articulating the core values of society, which address the very foundations of meaning through a sense of super ordinate purpose and significance. As Bellah puts it, religion "relate(s) man to the ultimate conditions of his existence." In that way, religion as ultimacy also commands the believer; it sets all other aspects of human existence beneath and in the context of that ultimate concern. Politics once more is made relative to and is validated by

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23 Ibid. p. 11.
religion. But religion, by its very claims, also becomes subject to the exercise of political power.

However, the way this dialectic works out varies greatly from religion to religion and is also a matter of personal experience and, not least, of action or practice.\textsuperscript{26} This adds visibility to religion, in terms of rituals, such as prayer and religious ceremony, a visibility that can become deeply enmeshed with the political realm. For instance, the practice of Khorra ritual (circumambulation) has a central place in Tibetan Buddhism. The practice of Khorra effectively distinguishes Tibetan from the Chinese, who do not practice Khorra and remain visibly foreign.

Symbolic religious anointing of the British monarch at the coronation, the use of prayer to invoke the support of the deity in connection with some governmental policy, and the interweaving of political and religious ideas in the American pledge of allegiance are instances of entanglement of religion with politics.

It is well known fact that religious ceremonies necessitate the designation of particular places or buildings as sacred arenas in which these activities are conducted - temples, mosques, shrines, synagogues, churches and the like. Indeed, in popular culture, some equate religion with those physical appurtenances. Here too points of contact with politics arise, as the classic case of Khorra ritual in Tibet. The symbolic centre of Tibetan protest since 1987 has been the Jokhang temple, because this temple evokes a multi-layered symbolization of Tibetan nationhood that resisted

Chinese efforts to represent Tibetan national history as auxiliary to the power of the Chinese state. The Chinese also attempted to gain the legacy of the king, Songsten Gampo, who first introduced Buddhism in Tibet.\(^\text{27}\)

There are also other instances of religion where points of contact with politics arise, such as the conflicts surrounding the golden Temple at Amritsar (Punjab, India) and the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh, India) or the Ka'bah at Mecca (Saudi Arabia). All these cases are those of religion tangled with politics, albeit in different ways. The same might be said of the relationship between Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral in England.\(^\text{28}\)

George Mayer unequivocally opines that, as these sacred places suggest, religion does not simply have meaning at the individual level, it also, like politics, has a corporate or communal character. This, in turn, presents another level at which religion and politics engage. Here it is a matter of group solidarity. It is also a matter, in many contexts, of inter-group tension and conflict. Both solidarity and conflict may have a religious element, revolving around shared and discrepant images of the sacred. They also may acquire other elements, either cultural (ethnicity, language, race, etc.) or economic (wealth, occupation, class, etc.), or a complex mixture of both. That is why, so often, inter-group religious cleavages are too complex to analyse the relationship between religion and politics, in which the two are closely integrated with one another.

Religious beliefs and practices underpin and enter into the heart of the political process, supporting and sustaining the exercise of power. But, political


concerns also get extended throughout the religious sphere, by this very token. The two has formed, in effect, one coterminous set of beliefs and actions. Such an inherent and internal twin relation between religion and politics exists in the case of Tibet where virtually all points of social and political life are touched by religious considerations. As already stated, the most visible evidence was the Buddhist clergy that draws 20-30 percent of male Tibetans into its ranks. It shows how religion represented every aspect of the Tibetan life.

Smith’s definition of traditional or pre-modern relationship between the religion and politics is matching with the Tibetan paradigm. He states that the sacred permeates the principal social institutions. Laws are divine commands, based on sacred texts or otherwise revealed to man. Where social classes and orders are ranked hierarchically, this pyramidal social system is divinely ordained. All education is religious in content and transmitted by religious specialists. Divine regulations govern economic behaviour, and ecclesiastical centres frequently wield extensive economic power. Above all, government is sacral. Religion and government, the two major society-wide institutions of social control, form an integrated religio-political system.²⁹

However, this pattern applied not only to Buddhists, but also to Hindu and Islamic societies as well. In the medieval west, it was a basic feature wherever the Roman Catholic Church was in the ascendency. It was also normative among tribal societies and within the ancient civilizations. However, the paradigm of basic pattern depended upon the particular institutional features of the given religion and politics. The key factor lay in whether religious authority and political authority were

exercised by the *same* leadership or by complementary but *distinct* leaders. The former, 'the organic model', is more characteristic of historic patterns within Islamic and Hindu cultures. By contrast, a 'church model', representing distinct religious and political structures, is more typical of earlier arrangements involving Christian and Buddhist institutions. Where such differentiation occurred, a greater variety of power relationships between religious and political structures became possible. In some societies, integration was achieved on the basis of the political authorities extending control over the religious institutions. In others, the religious leadership created a theocratic form of decision-making, as in Tibet before 1950s. In yet others, both co-existed in a pattern of symbiosis, as one can see it in the history of the Papacy in relation to the Holy Roman Empire.

In the modern world, secularisation is adopted as an attempt to eliminate religion, as it threatens the political realm. Hadden and Shupe (1986) go so far as to propose a cyclical theory of secularisation in which the process of removing the sense of the sacred from society contains the seeds whereby religion is eventually revived and revitalized. The experience of erstwhile Soviet Union was a case in point.

The ascent to power of Mikhail Gorbachev has, however, begun to transform the relationship between religion and politics in the Soviet Union. During the celebration of the Christian Millennium in Russia in 1988, Gorbachev met the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and began the process of applying *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) to the religious domain. This culminated

in a new law on 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' approved by the Supreme Soviet in 1990. The law, if fully implemented, would end state funding for atheistic propaganda, allow the establishment of Sunday schools and other proselytising activities, and even permit religious services to be held within the armed forces. In short, it would confirm the changed posture of the state towards religious organizations in the Soviet Union, which so far then has only appeared in more ad hoc and informal ways. However, the developments in Soviet Union went faster than what Gorbachev could conceive, and religion came back with a bang.

Wherever state has attempted to suppress religion, the latter could revive fast and could even capture the leadership of the total resistance movement. Tibet taken over by China in 1950 is an instance. The Chinese state has actively promoted an anti-religious policy to eliminate religion from the political arena and society, and secular ideological symbols and practices were tried in place of religious ones. And this attempt failed, and the first national uprising in 1959 triggered up the present conflict. In fact, secularisation attempts to alienate religion from politics has only led to revitalization of religion in post-secular societies.

As the events surrounding the publication of The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie show, religion continues to play a very powerful role in Iranian politics and elsewhere in the Islamic world. The same is also true of India, before, during and after Independence, where religion intruded into the political domain at every level. Radical Hindu groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad exercise considerable influence at the mass level. Equally, militant Muslims in Kashmir have agitated for its Islamicization, while similar developments among the Sikh
community have shocked Punjab State in India. The Indian government of V. P. Singh was itself brought down in 1990 over a dispute between rival religious communities. All in all, Indian politics will no doubt continue to be heavily influenced by religion, as the country moves forward through the myriad problems of social, economic and cultural change.

Indeed, within the polity, a clear religious imprint can be detected in every facet. At the level of the political culture, religious beliefs make a contribution; at the constitutional level, issues of church and state still remain contentious. And within the arenas of pressure group politics, electoral politics and policy-making, religion plays a substantial role. Roman Catholic bishops assert their views on nuclear weapons and the rights of the unborn; powerful Jewish groups lobby on behalf of Israel; born-again evangelicals turn 'liberal' into a term of political derision. All of these facts and the events in the past three years cap an extraordinary decade of religious-political developments in the arguably most modern and developed of societies, the United States of America. This reinforces the view that the study of religion and politics has then a rosy future the world over. In the same vein, Buddhism has conditioned life and politics in Tibet. The grand Lamas, the hierarchies of the Buddhism of Tibet, have played great roles in consolidating and strengthening it. The Dalai Lama, one of the great Lamas, is the crown of all of them. He is considered incarnation of Chenrezi / Avalokitesvara, the Patron and protector of Tibet. Therefore, any attempt to alter the system in Tibet has only sparked off revolts in the past.

For a long time, Tibet and religion (Buddhism) seemed synonymous because of religion playing a political role. This was not unique to Tibet. Marx once said of Spain's king as his "Most Catholic Majesty." Britain's Monarchs were held to reign "by the grace of God" and titled Defender of the Faith. In the US, where capitalism dragged no feudal tail, the motto that "In God We Trust" appears on all coinage. In the feudal society of Europe, the church had once consistently preached the sacred character of kingship. The church guided the interest of the king; it had not been generally beneficial to the spiritual development of the church. The alliance between the crown and the church had led to almost complete secularisation of the church. In this context, we can rightly say that Tibet was similar in the administrative system of dichotomy, which prevailed on the spiritual power of the ecclesiastical classes and their active participation in political affairs. This was the arrangement behind the intricate relation between religion and politics in the traditional Tibetan society.

Traditionally the Dalai Lama represents the head of state and religious hierarchy in the state. The Dalai Lama form his government on the concept of the Chhore sungdel, the harmonious blend of religion and politics, which is the system of the government where both monks and laymen share the administrative responsibilities of the state. In 1935, the present XIV Dalai Lama had been the youngest Dalai Lama to establish his regime. Prior to signing the "peaceful liberation," Tibet was a working theocracy, where Buddhism dominated both the state and society. The structure of the government reflects the dual authority of the religion and the state. The traditional structure of Tibetan government was complex,

owing to the combination of dual authority and feudalistic characteristics of nationality. However, by 1951, the position of the Dalai Lama as the head of the state came to an end with the signing of the "peaceful liberation."

The practice of Buddhism has not been merely a system of their belief. But, it encompasses the entirety of their culture, civilization and constitution - the very essence of their lives. It formed the social fabric linking them to the land of all bounds, which defined the Tibetans as a people and as a nation. Religion was undoubtedly the strongest principle that guided Tibet as a nation. The XIV Dalai Lama has remarked on Buddhism as the "Metaphor" that changed the entire course of Tibetan history. Generation of Tibetan intellectuals studied and developed a profound culture that closely coincided with the original principles and philosophy of the Dharma. Down through the centuries, their dedication and services brought about extraordinary developments, which are unique among the literary and cultural achievement of the nations of the world.

**Chinese Policy on Nationalities with Special Reference to Tibet**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a state of multiple nationalities living within the common geographical space. It is maintained that China is a unified state with many nationalities. The Chinese (Hans) had a long history of conflict with minority groups, which many times rose against to challenge the notion of Han superiority.

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37 The Department of Information and International Relations of Tibet, *Proving Truth from Facts* (Dharamsala: Government of Tibet, 1993) p. 78.

38 Ibid. p. 29.
Since the establishment of Communist rule in China, the notion of Han superiority underwent perceptible changes. The PRC policy makers adopted the tenets of the Soviet Marxist paradigm of dealing "minority problems."³⁹ As such, national minorities were granted regional autonomy in 1949 as a political substitute for self-determination.

The former Soviet Union was the first Communist state to tackle the 'problem' of nationalities. However, different schools within the Marxist framework dealt the issue differently.⁴⁰ Marxists maintained that the question of nationality is an imperial phenomenon, which is perpetuated by imperial powers for their expansionist designs. Rosa Luxembourgh took the concept of self-determination as an abstract idea. Her exposition of self-determination was based more on the cultural aspect of nationalism. The Soviet Marxists considered the idea of the right to self-determination as a bourgeois concept and formulated alternatives in the form of provision for cultural autonomy.⁴¹ The Social Democrats in Europe also did not accept the notion of self-determination and opined for the unity of nation. Thus, they maintained the national question as subordinate and within the nation state as an issue of "nationality" at sub-national or cultural national plane.

However, one should note the fact that the question of nationality involves in a richer dialectic. Lenin conceptualised the complex question of nationalities in dialectical terms. He gave precedence to the concept of classes, class-consciousness and class struggle over national demands. He asserted that "national demands are subordinate in the interest of class struggle, the recognition of the rights to self-

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determination entails for the working classes of the different nations. For this purpose, Lenin stood for the emancipation of all the oppressed nationalities. He argued that the oppressed nationalities should be given the freedom to secede, in order to eliminate the webs of mutual distrust and hostility among them. Given "the right to secede," the desire for separation and fragmentation will lose its priority. However, a principle of unity overrides Lenin's understanding. Perhaps, this might be the reason that many scholars were apprehensive of the Leninist paradigm of "self-determination". What could be at stake were the national feelings of the minorities. Nevertheless, the successors of Lenin also followed the same policy on nationality question.

China adopted the Russian policy of dealing with minority ethnic communities that manifested well in Mao's writings. The differences among the nationalities were recognized as "ethnic" whereas they were previously dismissed as merely regional. This semantic shift from "regional" to the "ethnic" reflects the salience of the politics in the PRC. However, this understanding was short of assigning nationhood to minorities. The notion of the relationship between the minority nationalities and Han became an integral part of the PRC agenda, in order to integrate the minority communities of the mainland. Therefore, they imposed a Marxist-Leninist framework, while keeping in the mind to what extent freedom and power should be granted to minorities, which they totally deprived in the past. Although the relation of mainland Han Chinese with the minority communities dates

43 Ibid. p. 158
back to around 2000 years, apparently every minority group always regarded the big Han nationality with suspicion and mistrust.\(^{44}\)

Apparently, till the arrival of Sun Yat-sen in the political map of China, the notion of Han superiority remained visible. Therefore, he attempted to assimilate the non-Han peoples with the Han culture through development and inter-marriage. However, the attempt could not materialize. And subsequently, during the period of Chiang Kai-shek, the traditional theory of great Han nation was popularised in large scale.

In 1920s, the CCP (1922) recognized the individual identities of Han, Mongol, Tibetan and Turk peoples. As per *locus standi*, in 1928, CCP declared democratic republic for Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia within a Chinese Federation Republics.\(^{45}\)

In 1931, the CCP accepted the right of "self-determination" of national minorities of China and the formation of independent states for each national minority such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Yunnan and Kweichow was deliberated at the CC meetings.\(^{46}\)

With Mao Zedong coming to power the vision of federation lost its vitality. He objected to the idea of self-determination and substituted it with the notion of 'liberation' of the oppressed and argued that the national minority question in China


\(^{46}\) Ibid. p. 217
was not independent but an integral part of liberation from oppression.\textsuperscript{47} He believed that the traditional ruling classes, foreigners and the previous government of Guomindang (Kuomintang) have been oppressing Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia. Thus in 1935, during the Long March, he propagated the idea of united front against the foreign imperialist aggressors. In 1940, CCP formulated the objective of unity, mutual help, trust and confidence among the Chinese nationalities in order to reach "national equality".\textsuperscript{48}

The basic principles were allowing minorities to manage their own affairs, respect of their religious beliefs, customs, and language habits and to assist them in improving their socio-economic condition. These included not only liberation of their economy and independent development but also allowing them to establish military to protect the masses.

By 1949, there was a paradigm shift from "right to self determination" and "right to secede" and "right to regional autonomy." With the changing concept, Mao, expressed that the concept of national identity is imperialistic and bourgeois in its latent potency and added that such superfluous condition of fragmentation (ethnicity, religion custom and language) hinder the class fragmentation and polarization of the society, which is more real and explicit as they are based on the mode of production and relations of production in a given society.

He further argued that ethnic antagonism will not be the real problem because the adoption of tolerance and non-oppressive attitude toward all ethnic


only solution of nationalism is to recognize the fact of attempting a forcible assimilation of Tibet with China. Since the Chinese attempted to integrate Tibet as an integral part of China, the latter was always faced with the problem of nationalism, which still remained an unacknowledged problem.

Regardless of what happened, it is true that the Chinese policy makers gave special emphasis on the question of nationalism since 1950. The problem of nationalism still exists, because it is linked with the theory as well as ideology. No amount of Marxist paradigm of nationalism, the Chinese ideological weapon, could compete with the stronghold of Tibetan nationalism, because Tibet had a very strong sense of nationalism manifested as oneness of the people. The concept of Tibetan nationalism was, however, not the same as the one the Europeans evolved after Napoleon, which was excessively political and governmental. Tibetan nationalism has always been a geo-cultural concept, deeply rooted in its history, its literature, and above all its religiousness - first Bon (Pon) and then Buddhism. Tibet did not look outside the country to learn lessons in nationalism.\(^5\) However, her recent experience with the China enhanced her to know more about the theory of international concept of nationalism.

Gellner's notion of nationalism as "theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries shouldn't cut across political one" applies aptly with Tibet.\(^5\) In the case of Tibet, geography and history created the feeling of oneness among different groups of people who inhabited on the extremely diversified landscape - the high mountain of the west, the deep river valleys of the south, and

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the natural passes in the hills of the north and the east. The people of the different regions speak different dialects even though the language is one. And the varied way of life differs from region to region, without any threat to diversity. The thread of unity in this apparent diversity remains very strong because it was created not out of any sense of personal or political aggrandizement but through a very long process of evolution.

Thus, in the past as well as in the present, Tibet is indeed considered a great nation, politically and culturally. Even the PRC recognized Tibet as a minority nationality in 1950. Mao Zedong stated in 1952 that while several thousands of Han (ethnic Chinese) people lived in Sinkiang (Xinjiang), there are hardly any in Tibet, where the Chinese army finds itself in a totally different minority area. Thus, before the PLA entered Tibet in 1950, there was, by the PRC's own admission, a distinctive Tibetan population and no significant Chinese population in Tibet. Tibet was functioning fully as an independent state.

The four requirements of statehood in international law are population, territory, government exercising effective control over the population, and capacity to enter into relation with other states. When the PLA entered Tibet, she possessed all these attributes. Therefore, PLA's entry into Tibet constitutes an illegal act of aggression to suppress the Tibetan ethnic nationalism. China and PLA equipped themselves with the ideological weapon of Marxist theory of nationalism in order to

carry out the communist policy towards the Tibetans who turned out to be minority with the Chinese capture of power.

Ernest Renan defined nation as a soul or spiritual principle. These are but two aspects of the same thing. One is past and the other is present as one is common possession of rich legacy of the memories, while the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the wish to continue, to assist the individuals together that has been handed down. A nation is therefore a huge solidarity, constituted by feeling of sacrifice that have been made, and which will continue to be made. It supposes a past, but it nevertheless comes down to the present in a tangible fact: the consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue living together.\textsuperscript{57} This definition reflects that minority nationality like Tibet indeed is a nation. However, the Chinese have different nebulous notion of nation. According to them, nations are artificial units that came into being with the rise of capitalism,\textsuperscript{58} and they always claimed that Tibet is an integral part of China. The dictum response of China to nationalism is that as long as the minorities remain backward they cannot be called nations.

It is observable that during the World War II, China attempted to recognize minorities as nations within the "great national" China. Therefore, China treated Mongolia, Tibet and some others as autonomous democratic self-governing republics with the vision of framing Chinese Federal Republic. However, by 1949, the notion of framing federation was dropped. They adopted the new policy of "equality" among all nations to "develop" the "backward" nationalities. The wrong policy of nationalism triggered further conflicts. On May 10, 1956, Radio Peking


declared that the various national minorities are politically, economically and culturally backward as compared to Han nationality. The minorities live in extensive areas of rich natural resources, highly significant to the socialist construction of the motherland, the declaration continued. Considering the situation, the Chinese communist party formulated its policy towards nationalities. This policy was based on "consolidate, and build up the great motherland." The argument was that, recognizing self-determination, however, does not mean that each nationality must be independent and isolated; whether it is appropriate for a nationality to be independent is for the communist party to decide. Lenin expressed the essence of the right of nations to self-determination in a simple formula: "To separate in order to unite".

The new principle of equality among the nations and policies of developing backward nationalities are based on Marxism-Leninism. Socialism was against the wishes of minorities. Thus, the problem erupted when the minorities realized how the Communists were foisting their authority in Tibet, which led a simmering discontent against the Chinese. As the Tibetan nationality have cemented attachment on traditional society and always respected their unique way of life, the high spirit of patriotism makes it difficult for communists to drag the minority to further leap forward to socialism.

In order to deal with the nationalism problem a resolution was passed to establish the Preparatory Committee for Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART)

60 Ibid. p. 64.
such design was to integrate the administration of Tibet into that of the People's Republic of China. This committee (PCART) was to function as the central administration of Tibet rather than Tibetan government. The Dalai Lama was made its chairman without authority. As stated in his autobiography,

The committee was powerless, mere façade of Tibetan representation behind which all effective power was exercised by the Chinese. In fact, all basic policy was decided by another body called the committee of the Chinese Communist party in Tibet, which had no Tibetan members. 62

In 1956, PCART was set up and the Tashilhunpo estate and the regions under the jurisdiction of the Governor General (a Tibetan government appointee) of Chamdo in eastern Tibet were separated from the jurisdiction of Tibetan government in Lhasa and their administrative organs were given the equal status as the Tibetan government, thereby reducing the authority of Tibetan government. 63 Reducing and slashing the monastic administration and emphasis on secular feature were perhaps to weaken the traditional unity of Tibetan society. After minimizing the monastic administration, the democratic reforms were incorporated in Kham and Amdo on the pattern of the new order. Under the new order, the monasteries' lands were curbed. Monks and influential personalities were imprisoned and subjected to various ignominies and condemned to death after a farcical trial. They introduced class-consciousness in order to instigate the very idea of exploiters (elite) and exploited (serf) along the Marxist line.

Every effort was made to adopt the paradigm of modern Marxist society. All discussion and thinking that did not go along with the socialist ideal was banned and


depicted as reactionary or counter-revolutionary. Despite the introduction of effective administrative and political measures to subvert traditional government of Tibet, the Chinese failed to produce any successful impact on Tibet. This was due to the Buddhism, which constructed both the state and society. The absence of peasant rebellion in Tibetan history is in stark contrast with China's turbulent history, especially since the 19th century. While it does not prove that the Tibetans were happy and prosperous, it does suggest that their value system and social structure were in working condition. Communists, of course, can say that it was "opiate of the people". That kept the peasant docile and contented, but the function of ideology is precisely that: the definition of the situation.

Till Chinese invasion (1950) Tibet was a working theocracy. Although it appeared to have a feudalistic structure, it consisted of myriad social groups, workers, peasants and merchants, but there was no "class hatred" as in China. The selection of the Dalai Lama is a visible epitome where there was no class-consciousness. The Dalai Lama may emerge from the economically lowest section in society, as the 'grand fifth' was the son of a poor peasant from Chug-gye. Perhaps, if he comes from a rich family, its automatic involvement might tend to make him an already influential family excessively powerful. The Dalai Lama's office is no one's privilege. The manner of less choice combines respect for popular democracy with regard for metaphysical monarchy. Tibetan society was seen as classless during the Long March, because the Tibetan Theocracy was functional, and Tibetan Society including its value system was fundamentally different from China.

65 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 76.
Chinese Revolution did not touch Tibet at all until 1950. There was less likelihood of revolt, if those responsible for the execution of Chinese policy towards Tibet kept these basic points in mind. 67

Volume V of Mao Zedong's selected works is a testimony to the fact that the late chairman was the architect of Chinese policy in Tibet. In his policy directive dated 6 April 1952, and address to the generals who were leading the PLA force into Tibet, Mao instructed:

Make every possible effort and use all suitable means to win over the Dalai Lama and majority of the upper strata. Isolate the minority of bad elements in order to achieve long-term goals of transforming Tibetan economy and policy gradually without spilling blood.

He warned that Tibetan was different from Han and stressed that they have no material base in Tibet. In terms of social power they are stronger than us, which for the moment will not change. 68 June Dreyer's observation on Tibet transformation is commendable, which stated that under the so-called People's Liberation policy during 1951-1959, the Chinese Communists made no direct contact with the masses. This is surprising, as one would normally expect the Communists to urge the proletariat to “shake off their yoke.” The only contacts that the common Tibetan had with the communists were at the road camps and on journeys. The Chinese used uniformed comrades to encourage the Tibetans to work industriously on the roads, but they made no efforts to indoctrinate them. They seem to know that the Tibetans were stubborn and conservative, and they would not exchange their own worst vices for the best Chinese virtues. They were deeply rooted in Tibet and in any thing that

67 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 74.
was in Tibetan. The majority was quite unreceptive to the new ideas especially to communism, which directly opposed the spirit of their way of life. Admittedly, there were a few Tibetans who responded to the Chinese call. In Sakya, about six young beggars and orphans became "Chinese". 69

The 1951 agreement between China and Tibet signed in Peking 70 never mentioned a word about socialism. It hesitated even to use the word "democratic" to qualify the "various reforms" introduced. Instead, it guaranteed that (1) the existing political system, including the power and the position of the traditional ruling elite, would function as before; (2) neither the income nor power of the monasteries would be reduced and religious freedom would be protected; and (3) there would be "no compulsion on the part of the central authorities," with regard to the unspecified "reforms." As far as the policy implementation was concerned, the Chinese local authorities tried to adhere to the terms of the agreement to a degree that earned them the wrath of the radicals during the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping was questioned. "Why did Teng Hsiao-p'ing, as the general secretary of the Central Committee, try so hard to please, care for and support the former Tibetan local government headed by the Dalai Lama? 71

For the majority of the ruling class there was no reason why formal co-operation would be unacceptable as the argument in the following passage explains:

As far as education and natural ability went, they were still miles ahead of the masses, having generations of learning to their advantage, Consequently, if they studied Communism and sent their children to school,

69 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 78.
70 See the full document in Chanakya Sen, Tibet Disappears, pp. 78-81.
71 See the most interesting revelation by a group of Red Guards, "How the revolt in Tibet broke out," Tibet 1950-1967 (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968) p. 690.
they would undoubtedly occupy the best positions even in the new society. Names and titles might vanish, but in substance they would continue to enjoy the same privileges.\textsuperscript{72}

If the Chinese demonstrated such flexibility and responsiveness to the situational demands in Tibet, we might ask what caused the Tibetan Rebellion of 1959. The overall Chinese policy towards political Tibet was undoubtedly realistic and imaginative, perhaps based on the united front strategy. However, with regard to ethnic Tibetans, the Chinese policy was based on a rigid legality and lack of realism: treat the ethnic Tibetans living in China, twice as numerous as those under the Dalai Lama, as both \textit{de jure} and \textit{de facto} Chinese, since they were not under the jurisdiction of Lhasa. This was one of the fundamental flaws in the Chinese policy toward Tibetans and a basic cause of the revolt. It was a great error to base policy on such rigid apparent legality and far removed from the actual situation. No matter how far these Eastern Tibetans were away from Lhasa or even how relatively close they were to the Chinese provinces, the fact was that, in the 1950s, they behaved and acted like any other Tibetan. And this fact should have been taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{73}

This legalistic distinction actually has an important political and legal implication that China was probably unaware of at the time: China recognized political Tibet, i.e. territory under the effective political control of the Tibetan Government, as a separate, if not independent, political entity. The implication is that the “recovery or restoration” of a lost province would not however require a


\textsuperscript{73} The Chinese imaginative policy between 1951 and 1959 is still little known to the world outside. Dawa Norbu attempted to show this policy in operation in his book. See chapters 6 to 9, \textit{Red Star Over Tibet}. See also Dawa Norbu, \textit{China Quarterly}, no. 77, 1979, pp. 74-100.
treaty with the rebel province itself. 74 The terms of agreement signed between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama's Government, most of which as we have observed were favourable to the traditional elite, were applicable only to that part of Tibet ruled by the Dalai Lama. This means that around two-thirds of the Tibetan speaking population was subjected to a radical policy similar to the one pursued in the rest of China, which proved unsuitable.

The equanimity with which the majority of the ruling classes reacted to the ideological (Buddhism and Communism) crisis is perhaps an indication of how resigned the elite have become to the high-headedness of the authorities. The Tibetan elites could have chosen a path of managing to occupy the best positions even in a new communist polity and continued to enjoy the same privileges, though the names and titles might vanish. 75 However, against the creation of class-conscious policy, a sense of pan-Tibetan national consciousness emerged as a strong national solidarity. For the Chinese, there was not much difficulty in exercising their policies in Tibet, owing to the 1951 agreement between Tibet and China. The agreement authorized PLA entry into Tibet and empowered the Chinese government to handle Tibet's external affairs. 76 In 1956, the Tibetan army was integrated with the PLA.

In 1959, the Chinese accused the Tibetan government of having co-operated with the insurgents. They were determined to crush all opposition by exerting through the Dalai Lama and Kashak. The Dalai Lama and his cabinet proclaimed the banning of public meeting and urged the people to refrain from any thing that would

impair the relation between China and Tibet.\textsuperscript{77} Subsequently, the Prime Minister Lukhangwa was sacked, when he criticized Chinese occupation in eastern Tibet and refused to have the Tibetan National flag replaced by the Chinese, which symbolized the final integration of Tibet into China. He insisted that all the negotiation between Chinese and Tibetan governments should be conducted through the office of the Prime Minister. Though theoretically, the Dalai Lama stood for ultimate authority, the Prime Minister exercised the power in practice. After the dismissal of the latter, no successor was appointed.

But the mass resentment against the Chinese policies could not be suppressed by such measures and it found expression in another way, as was demonstrated in 1959. However, it should be noted that the Chinese policy in Tibet was not lacking in interventions, both in terms of indoctrination as well as policy. The Chinese attempted to re-design Tibet into the image of China. In order to achieve this objective, the following measures were taken up:

- Department of New Democratic Youth, Lhasa in 1952
- Bank of China, Lhasa in 1952
- Sino-Tibet Syndicate in 1952 (that monopolized Tibet's foreign trade)
- Central Assistance of Patriotic Youth and Women Patriotic Federation in 1953
- The regular motor traffic joining three provinces of Tibet by Sinkiang-Tibet-Chinghai -Tibet highway in 1954

\textsuperscript{77} Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, \textit{Four Rivers, Six Ranges} (Dharamsala: Information and Publicity Office of HH The Dalai Lama, 1973) p. 40.
All these schemes were with ulterior motives, aimed at consolidating their position and attracting the masses to their side. But these schemes were not fully successful in Tibet. However, it impressed some sections of the people and gained footage in the world press of up-grading the backward population.

From 1952 onwards the policies to de-nationalize the Tibetans were adopted whereby about 6,000 youth were sent to Peking Institute of Nationalities under the pretext of educating them. But this policy to de-nationalize them also faced failure and these students had conflict with their counterparts over the political status of Tibet. The students raised their voice for Independent Tibet in 1957.78 One of the graduate students stated that he carried Karl Marx, Lenin and Mao in his head, but in his heart he carry the Dalai Lama. This explains in volumes how far the indoctrination policies were unsuccessful.

One of the early policies of the Chinese towards Tibet was the promulgation of propaganda team. In remote areas, this team displayed films and operated medical units in order to publicize the seventeen-point agreement and also to assure demonstrators that there would not be any dramatic change. The masses were pacified and communism was not seen as an immediate threat to their way of life. In the meantime, they were aware of the large influx of Han population into Tibet. In China the Communist propaganda had positive impact, but in Tibet the rhetoric of anti-imperialism and unification of the 'motherland' made no impact.

Chinese Policy toward Kham and Amdo

The Kham and Amdo areas were not under the jurisdiction of Lhasa nor were they signatory to the seventeen-point agreement (1951). Ethnic Tibetans, who were under the Chinese jurisdiction, had inhabited Kham and Amdo. Some of the inhabitants accepted the nominal Chinese ruler since Qing dynasty and national government had also appointed same leaders. However, the national government could never lead a firm and effective rule over these people. According to Dr. Andri Migot, a French who travelled in the area just before the Chinese take over of Tibet, “Chinese control is little more than nominal,” and the Tibetans completely disregard the Chinese administration and obey their own chiefs. One very simple fact illustrates the true status of Sikang's Chinese rulers: nobody in the province will accept Chinese currency.79

The destabilization of the Chinese position in Tibet came from unexpected quarters. It was due to lack of political acumen, which failed to acknowledge the real status of Kham and Amdo. The ethnic people of this area had de facto and de jure cultural affinities and ties with the rest of Tibet. No matter, how far the eastern Tibetans were from Lhasa or even how relatively close they were to the Chinese province, they behave and act like any other Tibetan. And this fact has been taken into consideration.80

There was one important political and legal implication that China was unaware of at that time in her action. China recognized political Tibet, i.e. territory under the effective political control of the Tibetan government, as a separate, if not

80 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 79.
independent, political entity. The seventeen-point agreement was signed between the Chinese Central government and the Dalai Lama's government. So, Kham and Amdo were not bound by any of this agreement. 81

When one reflects the Status of Kham and Amdo in the light of the last hundred years, the Chinese government is found to be never in effective control of the areas. So Kham and Amdo enjoyed incredible amount of independence both from China and Lhasa. Although Khambas had hostile attitude towards the Tibetan elites and government, their loyalty to the Dalai Lama was unquestionable. Dawa Norbu have stated that this fact should have been the criteria of Chinese policy in "Inner Tibet" as it was in "Outer Tibet", because it is directly related to the aetiology of the Tibetan rebellion.

Although the Chinese were constrained by the seventeen-point agreement, the communists saw the whole of Kham and Amdo as falling under the legal and political jurisdiction of the Chinese central government. Thus, democratic reforms in Kham and Amdo were attempted more or less at the same time as in the provinces of Tsinghai and Szechwan, i.e. around 1952-53. Whereas, outer Tibet was allowed an extension of six more years of no reform period, China tried to force social changes into a segment of a whole, functioning as a single Tibetan Buddhist society and separated only by artificial legal segregation. 82 The first and foremost policies of communist China were to integrate the old administrative structure with new constitution, which grants setting up of autonomous administration areas. The local autonomy was granted in Tibetan majority area. By 1956, numerous Tibetan

82 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 82.
autonomous administrative areas were created in Kham and Amdo.\textsuperscript{83} In 1955, province of Xikang (Sikang) was abolished and integrated into province of Sichuan and declared Labrang its capital, a main centre of Tibetan activity and with the important Gelugpa monastery. However, no amount of autonomy impression could please the mass. The masses showed unremitting loyalty to their traditional leaders and considered the Dalai Lama as the real incarnation of Avalokitesvara.

The Buddha, Buddhism and Sangha (Monastic community) constitute the Tibetan equivalent of God, which was still sacred. The definition of the social situation provided by such value system was still considered valid, simply because of the lack of exogenous source of change prior to the Chinese intervention that could have undermined such beliefs. The suddenness of the Chinese "democratic reforms" had no time to upset the division of labour and undermine the traditional value system.\textsuperscript{84} If the revolt was in defence of their value system, it was against the reforms that the Chinese were trying to enforce, since the paradigm of communism and Buddhism were totally antithetical to each other. Thus, when the Chinese exercised tight control over value system and introduced social reforms, the ultimate response was revolt against the social change, as the social change intended to completely alter the picture of theocracy and strip their value system. The revolt was an expression of favouring of their old traditional system rather than supporting a Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideology that is in contrast to Buddhism as a value system. The anti-Buddhist reforms or acts of downgrading Buddhism were inconceivable as far as the Tibetans at that point of time were concerned.

\textsuperscript{83} Tsering Shakya, 1999, op. cit. p. 137.
\textsuperscript{84} Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 80.
Dawa Norbu remarked that in "outer Tibet" there was no revolt as long as Chinese did not tamper with the social and value system. The "inner Tibet" testifies unprecedented revolt against the Chinese the moment the Chinese attempted to change the functioning of the Tibetan sacred social system. Dr. Gopal Singh also stated that the Tibetan rebellion was in defence of Tibetan Buddhist values, and Khamba uprising was concentrated in those regions where "democratic reforms" were widespread (Liangshan, Apha and Kanze). Thus, Peking was forced to admit the revolt in Kham, Amdo and Goluk where large population were involved in the rebellion.

According to the hero of "four rivers and six ranges," the resentment over Chinese was due to the rapid changes of reforms. In the area of Gyalthang, the total population was divided into five strata as early as in 1953. The first strata were either publicly humiliated or condemned to firing squad. Monasteries were destroyed and monks were condemned to death in the areas of Bathang, Lithang, Gyalthang, Dergue and other places.85 When people began to realize how Chinese were foisting their authority and their system of government on the country, the simmering discontent against them nurtured by the stories of atrocities in the east grew into resentment and hostility.86

The Chinese forceful policies emboldened the revolt, and the adverse circumstances led to the formation of Mimang Tsongdu. The Mimang Tsongdu was strengthened when the Dalai Lama made a public address on 3rd July 1955. He stated that, "if the Communists have come to Tibet to help us, it is most important that they

86 Ibid. p. 39.
should respect the Tibetan people's own social system, culture, customs and habits, and honour the wishes of the whole people of Tibet, and do not obstruct or damage the high principles of our nation. If the Chinese Communist personnel in Tibet do not understand the condition, and harm or injure our people, you should immediately report the facts to the government. The government will certainly take the steps to make them correct their ways. If the Chinese government does not correct their ways, our government can immediately ask for their expulsion... All the Tibetans consist of Kham, U-tsang and Amdo; their spirit and way of living have intimate connection that they cannot be separated from each other. I hope all of you will deeply think over the matter, love each other and be united with each other and not become separated from each other.\textsuperscript{87}

The Dalai Lama's eloquent public speech was widely acclaimed throughout Tibet, which marked and symbolized the emergence of the Dalai Lama on the political scene in favouring of a united "Greater Tibet" and encouraging the anti-communist regime, believing in common goal of defending the existing value system at any cost. Regardless of animosities between the regions in the past, a popular protest sung in the streets of Lhasa reflected the mood of the people:

\begin{quote}
\textit{We would rather have the Dalai Lama than Mao-tse-tung;}
\textit{We would rather have Kashak than Uyon Lhan-Khang;}
\textit{We would rather have Ten-sung Mag-mi than the PLA;}
\textit{We would rather have our own (wooden) bowls than (Chinese) mugs.}\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

When China attempted to implement the "democratic reforms" and asked the Tibetan peasants if they would like "land reform" which would necessarily involve

\textsuperscript{87} George N. Patterson, \textit{Tibet in Revolt} (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) p. 111-12.
\textsuperscript{88} Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 89. Kashak means Tibetan Cabinet. Uyon Lhan-khang means Preparatory Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region. \textit{Ten-sung Mag-mi} means defenders of faith meaning Tibetan army.
taking away land from the monasteries, which owned about 37 percent of the land of Tibet, the Tibetan answer was "no." It must be added that this was their reply then. It should also be noted that although there was an acute shortage of grain soon after the arrival of about 40,000 Chinese troops in Tibet, there were no revolt, but only resentment. Nor was there any known peasant revolt against the unjust economic disparity that prevailed under the old order. The other example was in 1955, when the Mimang Tsongdu appealed to Communist China not to go ahead threatening their value system. Their stress was not at all the grounds economy but on religious values. Mimang Tsongdu stated that their religion is facing crisis, which has thrown them into the very deep valley of darkness and destruction. The Dalai Lama has been robbed of his political and religious powers. And communist China had been forcing communist ideas upon the Tibetan people. Communist China followed the most deplorable policy and practice of violence and failed to implement the promises made by them to the Tibetan people.

The above instances entail how religion had embedded in the people's mind. This mindset could be judged from the popular protest song and the Mimang Tsongdu's appeal to Chinese.

The Kanting Rebellion

Very often, one had the impression that the revolt of 1959 was the culmination of the revolt in Eastern Tibet in 1952-53, and more focus was on the role played by Khambas. This is because of the major part they played in the protest movement. But, the fact is that almost every part of Tibetan society contributed something or the

89 Ibid. p. 82.
90 George N. Patterson, Tibet in Revolt, (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 113.
other to the protest movement. It was a movement that galvanized thousands of people of all classes and ideologies into political action with the common aim of defending their value system, which felt threatened through the democratic reforms imposed by the alien statecraft against their wishes of favouring theocracy.

This protest movement had place for all segments in society. For instance, the monks organized the strategic guerrilla movements and fought with great zeal. The peasants proved to be excellent fighters though they were used in sub-services traditionally. George N. Patterson, an expert on Tibetan revolt, stated that over 80,000 rebels were involved in the rebellion, out of which some 12,000 were deserters from Kuomintang. The revolt however died down with no immediate help forthcoming from India or America, and because of the Chinese persuasion of east Tibetan leaders. The Chinese on their part relaxed their policy and also immediate land reform. But by 1953, a large number of activists including ordinary people joined hand with the guerrillas and the following year the revolt spread gradually all over eastern and northeast Tibet. The New York Times of 28 August 1954 reported that 40,000 farmers took part in an uprising in east Tibet, and most of the rebels were killed by communist troops in order to suppress the revolt.

There were never popular uprisings in Tibet till 1950s. But by 1955-56, open full-scale rebellion broke out in eastern province of Kham and Amdo, which is called “Kanting Rebellion.” This rebellion marked the united uprising of eastern

92 The Guardian, 2 September 1954.
Tibetans against China, finally leading to massive demonstration in Lhasa (1959) and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama.

Events that led to the Kanting rebellion were over the ideological differences between the Buddhist and Communist value systems. The abrogation of "Seventeen Points Agreement" of 1951, which explicitly states that the traditional status, and functions and powers of the Dalai Lama would not be altered and freedom of religious beliefs will be protected, ignoring the freedom of Kham and Amdo ethnic peoples, and drastically vitiating the social and cultural value system through the so-called democratic reforms had led to the revolt. The reforms carried out were associated with physical desecration, destruction and condemnation of religion, and ridicule of the practice of Buddhism. The plethora of democratic reforms was launched and enforced to curb and purge theocracy, as its practice threatened the road of Marxism and Leninism.

However, the attempt to suppress the theocracy through democratic reform was a failure. They might have succeeded in a long-term goal of democratic reform and integration of Tibet, if the policies were carried out in a spirit of democratic consolidation and arrived at consensus by all. Even the Dalai Lama suggested that: "the present conditions of Tibet are still a long way off from socialism... The reform can be done with the consent of leaders of Tibetans and people themselves and not on their behalf." 94

Despite warning, the Chinese enforced their democratic reforms in Lithang, Changtreng, Gyalthang and Yunnan areas. Thus fiercest fighting broke out between the Chinese cadres and the villagers of these areas who refused to co-operate with

them. In Changtreng, for nearly fifteen days, the villagers blocked the water, supplied the Chinese Camp. By the end of February 1956, the 3,000 monks of Changtreng, thousands of Khamba refugees and others who came to defend the monastery, were captured and bombarded by PLA in retaliation.

According to Michel Peissel, "... a war it was, with all the horrors of our age: the bombers, the glaring flash of incendiary charges, the billowing clouds of smoke from muffled explosion and the deep thuds of heavy artillery interspersed with the rattle of machine gun fire. Modern war with the whine of planes drawing closer to their targets, the shattering of planks, the thunderous renting of collapsing walls and smashing timbers, the sliding avalanche of crumbling partitions and, in the spare silence of stunned shock, the lonely bark of musketeers aim at steel birds, the 'sky boats', that came from the sky, one after the other, to bomb the monasteries of Kham and the towns of Batang and Litang in the fateful years that following the uprising".95

Chinese official reference to the Kanting was quoted from Anna Louise Strong's book - *When Serfs Stood Up in Tibet*. "The Kanting Rebellion broke out in the winter of 1955-56, and took the form of murdering Central Government Officials and Han citizens, there being no PLA arrived in the area. As soon as the PLA arrived, they easily put down the rebels, but these fled to deeper hills and eventually in Chamdo. Arms were easy to get, for at least fifty thousand muskets and rifles had been left in that area from the warlords' battles between the Tibetan and Szechwan warlords. The few airdrops from Chiang Kai-shek of American weapons and radio transmitters were hardly needed except for the sense of "foreign support" they gave

to the rebels. The Szechwan-Chamdo rebellion was basically repressed by the end of 1956, though isolated groups remain as bandits as long as any monastery fed them or until "local people's control" was organized. The bulk of the defeated rebels moved into Tibet. They were the Khambas, Sikang troops, cavalry, wild and undisciplined, accustomed to living by loot.  

This reference is unfortunate and completely erroneous, perhaps irony that Mrs. Strong forgot perpetrators who razed the monasteries and the extermination policies to weed out the "reactionaries." In Goluk area alone, thousands of tribal people and hundreds of monasteries were destroyed under the aegis of Chinese reign of terror. And in Dergue two hundred fifty monasteries and priceless manuscripts were destroyed. Lamas and rebel leaders were dragged to death.

Even the Chinese Communist press reports released witness the Kanting rebellion for the first time, and the Chinese Communist leaders openly admitted the existence of the rebellion in Kham and sought for the Dalai Lama's intervention as the situation was out of their hand. Never in his career had Mao received such a blow or gone so far as to publicly admit failure. Faced with the facts, Chou En-lai officially declared that 'mistake has been made' and so he approached negotiation for peace.  

Even the Dalai Lama's first press statement in exile accused the Chinese policies on Kham and Amdo, and the abrogation of 1951 agreement. However, the Chinese attacked the Dalai Lama's first statement in exile, blaming him of encroaching on the domestic affairs of China. The attack was based on the legal

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ground, stating that Kham and Amdo are under the Chinese jurisdiction. The New China News Agencies reported as follows:

In the so-called statement of the Dalai Lama in April 18 (1959) the Khamba Rebellion was mentioned in an attempt to prove that the Central People’s Government had violated the seventeen-article agreement on the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. But the so-called "Khamba Rebellion" (Khamba is Tibetan word) refers to areas around Kantse, Szechwan province, in the eastern Sikang - Tibet plateau, inhabited by the Tibetan minority nationality. Sikang area was not even a part of Tibet. Formally it was Peking province and later became part of Szechwan province.98

China's stand was legally and technically sound. However, the 1951 agreement of "peaceful liberation" of Tibet was signed between the Chinese and Lhasa governments only. Dawa Norbu stated that, in reality, the Tibetans in "inner Tibet" were no different from those in "outer Tibet." No matter whether the Tibetans were in China or in India, they were all united in one common objective during 1950s. Thus the Kanting rebellion marked the uprising of Kham, Amdo and U-tsang throughout the protest movement against the Chinese. Therefore, Kanting rebellion was revolt against their common enmity.

After Kanting rebellion, the revolt escalated and spread towards the western region, which finally swept Lhasa in 1959 that triggered the Dalai Lama's exile. Faced with a series of revolts in escalation, the Chinese embarked new strategic move to contain Khambas' rebellious activities. No doubt, the Chinese policy towards eastern Tibet was very harsh. Subsequently in 1958, in order to expunge the

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98 Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 83.
Khambas from Central Tibet (Lhasa), the Chinese presented the ultimatum to the Kashak to suppress Khambas, and deployed 40,000 soldiers along with 29,000-trained militia from China to weed out the Khamba rebellion. 99 However, the guerrilla movements were so strong and active, and events led to postponement of visit of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, to Tibet in 1959. Despite the multifarious policies to control the activities of Khambas, they could not put down the rebellion. Thus in 1958, the Communist China revised their attitude towards the Khambas and General Chang Ching-wu, the commander in chief of the Tibetan military district, was called back to Peking and a fresh offensive was launched. 100 This indicates or proves that the Chinese could barely control Tibet and shows the failure of their policies. Neither policies nor military strength could intimidate the people who were determined to free Tibet.

While the Chinese sought every possible means to "weed out reactionaries" in eastern Tibet, most of the Khambas shifted towards the Central Tibet. In 1958, over 15,000 rebel families and refugees from eastern Tibet pitched their tent in Lhasa. 101 When Lhasa was swamped with eastern refugees, the Chinese deported about 1,500 men to China. 102 They presented the condition that Khambas who do not have identity card would not be permitted to enter Lhasa. 103 This stern measure by Chinese drove the Khambas to commit more nationalistic and organized movement, even unprecedented. Under the single command of Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang of "Four Rivers, Six Ranges," they marched towards Lhasa from

100 Ibid. p. 110.
101 Ibid. p. 68.
103 Ibid. p. 98.
Lokha on 16 June 1958, asking central Tibet, the holy city, the Dalai Lama, the epicentre of the world, to join in their crusade for the value for which they fought. But once more, they encountered only obstructions and indifferences.\footnote{104 Michel Peissel, 1972, op. cit., p. 90.}

However, some of the Khamba chiefs deserted and their lawless activities caused great resentment among the people, which brought disgrace to the nationalist volunteer force.\footnote{105 Tashi Gampo Andrugtsang, 1973, op. cit., p. 90.} Thus the Chinese administration fully manipulated the situation and created the animosity and distrust between the freedom fighters and local population. They took advantage of few disloyal Tibetans and exploited them to raid and pillage the countryside, masquerading as freedom fighters.\footnote{106 Ibid. p. 66.} No doubt, when the protest movements moved towards central Tibet and when the prestige of Chinese administration began to erode, political chaos reached high intensity.

Political unrest led to division among the class of aristocracy in Tibet. The Dalai Lama and his group believed that Tibet's future lay in collaboration with China. The rebels were convinced that China and Tibet has irreconcilable ideas.\footnote{107 Michel Peissel, 1972, op. cit., p. 96.} Such a contrasting paradigm and predicament brought a great dilemma to the Dalai Lama about the issue of ethical and unethical code. He firmly believed that if Tibet continues to oppose and provoke the Chinese authority, it could lead Tibet into vicious circle of repression and popular resentment. For him, a violent opposition is not only impractical but also unethical.\footnote{108 Ibid. p. 100.} He was a man of conviction of ethical law. And after consideration, he sanctioned the anti-Tibetan polices, dismissed his prime
ministers, sent delegation to beg Khambas to give up their traditional arms and collaborated with Chinese policies against the wishes of his subjects. Later, in his memoirs, he stated that he agreed to carry out trivial Chinese demands, which cause no one any real inconveniences.\textsuperscript{109} It is unfortunate that the Dalai Lama failed to understand how significant it was for the Chinese to twist and manipulate the entire issue, and depicted and painted picture to the whole world that the God king was backing them.

Michel Peissel, other leading expert on Khambas, condemned the Dalai Lama and the ruling elite actions, and stated: "A word for the Dalai Lama, one single proclamation and all Tibet would undoubtedly have stood up and faced the Chinese. The Dalai Lama's failure to understand this, his failure to act, to speak and to lead his people to war, is perhaps the greatest tragedy of Tibetan history."\textsuperscript{110} However, the Dalai Lama stated that it was like "jumping off a cliff when you have eyes to see." Thus he was compelled to sanction and take unsavoury anti-Tibetan measures such as dismissing his ministers and banning Mimang Tsongdu, the anti-Chinese organization.\textsuperscript{111}

Despite the ban, the Khambas engaged in a total of 14 skirmishes in Lokha area between 1955-1959. There seems to be no end either to the tragedy or the irony. The PLA units, upon whom they were supposed to spy, trapped all the Tibetan "scouting troops". It was really a series of battles between seasoned Maoist guerrillas and medieval crusaders, and the result was a foregone conclusion despite

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. p. 102.
\textsuperscript{110} Michel Peissel, 1972, op. cit., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. p. 100-102.
the Tibetan determination and courage inspired by their unshakable faith.\textsuperscript{112}

Khambas, still with hope of recuperating, went to Kham for fresh recruits. But this was not easy, as the Chinese kept them constantly under fire and frequent attacks.\textsuperscript{113}

Meanwhile in Lhasa, unprecedented public anger shot up beyond the control of the Dalai Lama's hand, by the time (10 March 1959) when the Chinese invited the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical show. The whole atmosphere of Tibet was charged with anger, fear, suspense and suspicion, when the Chinese General dictated the Dalai Lama and his entourage to come unescorted by the Tibetan troops to the PLA headquarters, which ruled out the traditional practice of the Dalai Lama's escort.\textsuperscript{114} Dawa Norbu remarked that, what enraged the Tibetan public and created more suspicion was the insistent reminder, which the Chinese General sent to the Dalai Lama when the latter was taking part in the public ritual widely attended by Tibetans from all over Tibet. The immediate cause of the Lhasa revolt was therefore taken as trivial and "subjective". But, as Noel Barber remarks, it was not so trivial to the Tibetans then.

To the western eye, the reaction of Tibetans to these infractions of protocol may seem exaggerated (though one can imagine the hullabaloo in London if an invited diplomat chose to boycott the state opening of parliament). But one has to remember that Tibetans had been suppressed under occupation for eight years. When the simply devotedly religious people feel that they have been affronted, they would resort to means to give vent to their pent-up emotions, and that was what

\textsuperscript{112} Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 88.
\textsuperscript{113} Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, 1973, op. cit., p. 95.
\textsuperscript{114} Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 88.
happened.\textsuperscript{115} Under the accumulation of past experiences and present circumstances, they saw the Chinese invitation as a trick to kidnap the Dalai Lama (even though the Chinese did not have such intention). Thus on March 1959, around 30,000 Tibetans surrounded the Dalai Lama's Palace in order to fight for all that he symbolized to the Tibetans. Thus symbolically they guarded the Dalai Lama's palace rather than the Chinese PLA headquarters to prevent him from visiting the Chinese camp.

What was so striking beneath this strange folk behaviour was a resolute and fanatical sense of anti-Chinese and anti-Communist feelings.\textsuperscript{116} The slogans that were shouted has strong overtone of nationalism. The NCNA communiqué on the revolt scornfully commented that the spirit of this reaction soared to the clouds and they were ready to take over the whole universe.\textsuperscript{117} As the spirit of reaction reached and roared to the clouds, the mere sight of a Tibetan official who was pro-Chinese would be enough to stone him to death.

The Rebellion was suppressed after more than two days of fighting. A NCNA "rough figure" showed that by 23 March, more than 4,000 rebel troops were taken as prisoners, and 8,000 small arms, 81 light and heavy machines guns, 27 mortars, six mountain guns and 10 million rounds of ammunition were captured. Considering Tibet's total population of 1.2 million, the rebellion by 20,000 people who were mostly 'deceived and intimidated to join' in was not at all significant, as per the comments of NCNA. But the extent of the popular participation on the

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. p. 89.
\textsuperscript{116} NCNA, Tibet 1950-1967, p. 348.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. p. 351.
rebellion may perhaps be better gauged by the following PLA proclamation, which appeals and "hopes" that the Tibetan public would not help the rebels:

We hope that all the people, in Tibet, Lamas and laity will energetically help our army in the campaign to put down the rebellion and not shelter the bandits, supply the enemy or provides the rebellious bandits with information.\textsuperscript{118}

It is believed that the overall cause of 1959 revolt is religion. According to Tibetan proverb, 'if there be an enemy to Buddha, his followers must put on arms.'\textsuperscript{119} Tibetans saw Chinese "invasion" as a threat to their religion rather than economy and territorial integrity of Tibet. They perceive the Chinese ‘liberation’ as tendra - enemies of faith; the Khambas who led the national protest movement were called ten-sung - defenders of faith. The aim and objective of the protest movement was the defence of Tibetan Buddhism. The religious nature of revolt was further symbolized and enforced by the participation of monks and the loyalty to the Dalai Lama.

However, the participation of the monks in rebellion are often confused by the seeming paradox of the gentle monks participating in violence of killing. But in the Lamaist Tibet, the important legends described the fierce battle between the holy ones who defended the religious battle against the devil.\textsuperscript{120} Thus monks fought on occasions when their religion was threatened. And they were also trained to combat with the enemies of religion in defence of their faith. Thus, ten-sung (defender of faith) enjoyed the popular public support and sympathy. The fact that they were able

\textsuperscript{118} Dawa Norbu, 1979, op. cit., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{120} Michel Peissel, 1972, op. cit., p. 78.
to sustain their fighting against most heavy odds for about six years was testimony to the public support. The revolt therefore was only national in the sense that the sentiments of majority of all the Tibetans were involved. 121

Another controversial charge is that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) fostered the revolt. 122 However, the role played by the CIA is limited to a few airdrops and training to serve her geo-political interest. Therefore her role in Tibetan revolt against the Chinese is insignificant. There is no doubt that during late 1950s, CIA was using the Tibetan rebels to harass and destabilize the PRC. They trained small number of Khambas and airdropped some ammunition, in order to suppress the spreading of Communist hegemony in Asia. Tibet fitted in her scheme, when the revolt broke out in Kham after the enforcement of democratic reforms by Chinese. However, Tibet was not given the needed support. Tibet was used as a pawn and was given false hopes. The history and status of Tibet might be different today had US (CIA) and India supported Tibet in times of need.

On 17 April 1959, the Bombay Free Press quoted the Indian correspondent of London Daily Telegraph that India had a hand in the Dalai Lama’s escape. Jawaharlal Nehru stated that India did not have anything to do with the events of 1959.

When the Chinese grappled with Tibet, Nehru found himself under considerable pressure to act concretely against the PRC. However, he did not act, not because he was unable to change anything, but because he kept a wider

121 Phuntsog Wangyal, Political Development in Tibet, 1950-1959, A Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1974) p. 82.
122 Michel Peissel, 1972, op. cit., p. 78.
perspective on the issue. Nehru was in forefront of world leaders committed to uniting newly independent nations and finding peaceful solutions to world problems. He had a vision of India and China - the biggest countries in Asia collaborating for peace and development. Perhaps with this vision India entered into an agreement with China known as "Panchsheel agreement" in 1954. By virtue of this agreement, India recognized Chinese occupation of Tibet. But the irony is that China did not share Nehru's vision of friendship. In 1962, this vision of friendship was proved obscure and the rest is history. The Chinese went by the wisdom that there is no permanent enemies or friends in international relations. By the time India learned this lesson it was too late for her to act.

Therefore, the 1959 Tibetan national uprising was neither designed by CIA (USA) nor perpetuated by India, but by Tibetans alone. The movement of national uprising was widespread in time as well as in territory. The protest movement might have taken multifarious forms but have a common zeal in the approach of defending their value system.

In order to suppress the protest movement before it reached Lhasa, the Chinese enforced coercive measures to disarm the Khambas and accused protestors of being "reactionary" serf owners. In Dergue and Amdo the so-called serf owners were shot dead. This onslaught of provocative violent action led to unrest and armed conflict. The unprecedented armed conflict was thus exposed to the outside world in August 1954, with the report of 4000 farmers taking part in Kanting rebellion (New York Times, 28 February 1954). The high intensity of the protest movement that

developed from skirmishes to organized guerrilla movements caught the attention of USA (CIA) as well as China. The subsequent developments made the Chinese to reinforce PLA in Tibet and further harsh measures and also steps through the Dalai Lama's intervention to prevent the local people from helping the guerrillas.

By 1959, the whole atmosphere of Tibet was charged with anger, fear, and suspicion. When the Chinese general insisted on the Dalai Lama coming unescorted to their HQ, the flare-up of unprecedented public rage went beyond the control of the Dalai Lama and finally the developments triggered the Dalai Lama to exile.