Conclusion

More than the shift in Chinese policy or a change in government's perception of Tibet, the death of Mao Zedong on 9th September 1976 which led to the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as a paramount leader in China, had made the greatest impact on the new policy in Tibet. Deng's ascendancy to power marked a shift in the party's ideological stance from rigid Maoist orthodoxy to a more flexible and pragmatic policy of winning over the minority groups. This policy towards her minorities was no doubt motivated by its desire to integrate the groups into the national mainstream. Whatever the motive, the new leaders rejected Mao's maxim that the nationalities problem was in essence a class problem. Instead, they accepted the existence of the nationalities problem in the socialist period, and concluded that the CCP must make effort to reach out to the minorities, so as to improve ethnic relations and dispel misunderstandings, before the party ended up with serious losses.

At the same time, the leaders were aware that winning over the nationalities would be a hard task, one that could not be achieved in the immediate future. Hence, the leaders abandoned its policy of instant assimilation. Instead they worked at managing the diversity for the attainment of communism, rather than attempting to solve the nationalist problem once and for all. However, this did not mean that the party had rejected the long-term goal of assimilation of all minority groups. They perceived that once communism has been attained, the problem of nationalities would naturally disappear. As far as Tibet is concerned, the new leaders were of the opinion that the key to managing the Tibetan affair lies with the Dalai Lama, and if China
could achieve a conciliation with him, the party would be able to recover its position in Tibet.

The reformist leader’s policies are reflected in the new economic policy; negotiation with the Dalai Lama, acceleration of population transfer, relaxation to some degree of religious freedom and toleration, And added to these, Beijing’s latest attempt at the political and cultural integration and assimilation of Tibet with China is of appointing a rival Panchen Lama, as a measure to strengthen control over the region.

In this chapter, some observations and conclusions drawn from the study shall be briefly discussed.

One of Deng’s major objectives after he came to power was to start a process of reconciliation with the Dalai Lama, which began in 1978. The leaders decided that the key to managing Tibetan affairs was with the Dalai Lama. Deng’s position was that China’s doors to negotiation with the Dalai Lama are open to discussion except the question of Tibetan independence, which is totally ruled out. The negotiation between the two parties continued from 1978 – 1988 as we have already discussed in the earlier chapter. The negotiation reached a deadlock on the following grounds; Sino-Soviet relations began to improve by 1986, removing Chinese fear of external intervention. The fall of the pragmatic leader Hu Yaobang, who took special interest in the Tibetan question, fell out of power. This accelerated the shift in the Han – decision making: hard-liners gained greater say in the Tibetan issue. The hardliners were in no hurry for negotiation, in fact, if possible they would rather forget
Dharamsala. These are the main reasons for the deadlock in the dialogue.

The Chinese underlying suspicion was that the Dalai Lama harboured hopes of independence, which the Han nationalist wanted to erase once and for all from the pages of history. Thus, even now Beijing keeps on reiterating that the doors of negotiation are open but no question of Tibetan independence or political autonomy will be tolerated. Thus, in the final analysis China refused to concede to the Dalai Lama’s political demands as reflected in his 1987 and 1988 proposals. With the passing away of Hu and Deng, there is no single leader in the Central Committee of the CCP, who has interest in solving the problems in Tibet. On the other hand, the new leadership’s attitude towards the negotiations and the Dalai Lama had toughened. It is now apparent that Beijing could not care less about having the Dalai Lama back in Tibet. In other words the Chinese are content to abandon any links with the Dalai Lama.

The only concession that China made was in the economic field. This was clearly reflected in Hu Yaobang’s six-point directives made after his visit to central Tibet. Hu’s directives recognized the uniqueness of Tibet, its special characteristics and special needs. Firstly, the TAR government was to fully exercise its autonomy though it should be noted that this autonomy does not extend to the political plane and refers mainly to economic decentralization. Secondly, Tibetan farmers and herdsmen were exempted from taxes and quota sales to the states as well as assignment of work without pay. They were allowed to keep their produce or dispose of it for their own benefit. Thirdly, a flexible economic policy was implemented in Tibet recognising Tibet’s special situation and tailored to Tibet’s special needs. Fourthly, subsidies from
the central government was increased to develop the local economy. Fifth, within the socialist framework, efforts were made to revive and develop Tibetan culture, education and science. Lastly, the participation of Tibetan cadres in the local administration was increased and large numbers of Han cadres were withdrawn from Tibet.

It appears that China was quite sincere and serious as far as the economic reforms were concerned and the results and benefits of the economic reforms are visible both at the regional and grass root level as reported by Chinese press and witnessed by some Tibetan and Western visitors. It does not matter that while this reform was an important indication of a marked improvement in the living standards, in objective terms the standard of living returned to the level the people enjoyed before the Chinese ‘liberation.’ But on the social level, the impact was greater. Life became more relaxed and there was no longer pressure to attend countless meetings. Tibetans reverted to their traditional ‘way of doing things’, and traditional cultural practices returned with a new vitality. Tibetans were also allowed to visit relatives living in India, and China even extended invitation to Tibetans living abroad to open business in Tibet. Hu’s farsighted gesture of appeasement was not only appreciated by the Tibetans in Tibet, but by the Dalai Lama himself.

But along with the economic reform especially since early 1990s when Lhasa was declared a special Economic Zone came the Chinese immigrants in increasing numbers. Chinese justification for this population transfer which is in fact an indirect colonisation of Tibet in terms of the need to send skilled labour from China into Tibet where skilled labour is scarce. However, Chinese immigrants were given special
incentives such as better access to education, housing and jobs etc., which were
denied to the sons of the soil. We can see their strategy as a disguised Chinese
policy to colonise Tibet so as to make it impossible for Tibetans to demand self-
determination, as well as to strengthen the social basis of Chinese security system in
Asia and the Himalayas.

If China was fairly sincere to implement the economic reform in Tibet, as
studies suggest, Chinese masters are less sincere in granting the Tibetans religious
freedom. As a propaganda stance, Beijing declares that there is full religious freedom
in Tibet. But this is largely cosmetic. A small number of historically important
monasteries were restored. But over 90 percent of the monasteries and nunneries in
Tibet were destroyed. Above all, the Chinese practice of their policy in Tibet
indicated that religious freedom is meant for the old and certainly not for the party
cadets and young people. Thus it is clear that China still works on the assumption that
religious influence in Tibet will die and if not it is the ultimate party policy to
eliminate religion from Tibetan society. This is reflected in the number of party
official documents, which were published in the west and Tibetan refugee media.

The new leaders pursed a carefully drafted policy on Tibet, which had Deng
Xiaoping's pragmatic stand. The first part of Deng's strategy was to bring back the
Dalai Lama to China because the Lama outside China creates problems and
embarrassment for the Chinese government. Since the reform, Deng had become the
West's favourite Communist leader and China under him was widely praised by the
Western countries. The only blemish on China's international image was the Dalai
Lama's decision to remain in India, and this was of great concern to the new leaders.
When the Dalai Lama refused to accept the terms and conditions laid down by Deng Xiaoping, Beijing hardened the process of negotiation. This convinced the Chinese leaders to pursue a hard-line policy on Tibet, i.e., to accelerate the population transfer to Tibet as a final solution.

The religious policy and new economic policies were designed to win the loyalty of the Tibetan people to the Chinese State. But the revolt in 1987 and 1988 in Lhasa and other places indicates that Tibetans were not reconciled with the China’s new economic and religious policy. This in turn led to harsher policies and restrictions on Tibetan religious activity and movement within and outside Tibet. Thus we once again see China’s motivated actions in accelerating the population transfer as the final solution to the Tibetan unrest. The implication is that once Tibet is flooded with the Han population Tibetan resistance to the Chinese rule would be neutralized and diminished greatly. In other words, Beijing envisages a final fate for Tibet similar to those of other minorities like the Mongols and the Manchus is apparent.

China’s stand on Tibet had further hardened with the death of the Xth Panchen Lama and the dispute that followed. The dispute between China and Dharamsala is likely to go on for decades. It is now more likely that China would refuse to negotiate over long-term solution of Tibet in the near future. China has disregarded the religious sentiments of the Tibetan people by rejecting the true reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, recognised by the Dalai Lama. This is an infringement on the freedom of religious beliefs and practices of the Tibetan people. By imposing their own ‘Panchen Lama’ on the people China hopes to make the Dalai Lama irrelevant to the Tibetans living inside Tibet. Its main motive is to manipulate and use the institution of the
Panchen Lama to advance their political interest in Tibet and also to influence the choice of the next Dalai Lama. This would certainly enable China to clamp effective control over Tibet. Tibetans have already lost their country and much of their heritage, and now they are in danger of being stripped of their spiritual leadership.

We observe the following components of the Chinese policy on Tibet, which marks a considerable departure from the previous policies. First, Chinese Communist leaders tried a peace offensive policy, which included negotiation with the Dalai Lama to bring him back to China, and an appeasement policy that allowed religious freedom however limited, in order to win their loyalty. Secondly, when these appeasement policies failed, China resorted to Deng Xiaoping’s policy of populating Tibet by the Hans as a final solution to the Tibetan question by Han population transfer. These are the lines of policy suggested by this thesis as evident during the period 1976-95.

The period covered in this study witnessed the rise of Deng Xiaoping as a paramount leader in China and as a result his views on Tibet are reflected in the Chinese post-1976 policy towards Tibet. However, after initiating the dialogue with the Dalai Lama, Deng Xiaoping handed over the Tibetan question to Hu Yaobang to implement and carry on the new policy. But it appears Deng’s ideas were not strictly followed by the Chinese bureaucrats due to domestic and international political changes, which we have discussed earlier. Now it is the hard core Han nationalist Chinese bureaucrats in the party, state and the PLA which make the prospects of negotiation problematic until a new generation of leaders emerge in China. The future of Tibet lies in the present generation from whom it is hoped that someone will lead
the way for democracy in China. Until such time as China’s authoritative government is eliminated, it is unlikely that Tibetans will gain their autonomy.

While China refused to concede to the Dalai Lama’s political demands i.e., genuine political autonomy, this period witnessed an overall relaxation and liberalisation which the Tibetan people did not have for decades especially during the Cultural Revolution. This relaxation is particularly evident in economic and cultural spheres, which we have analysed in this study. It is to be noted, however, that the post-Mao leaders’ policy was not to help the Tibetan people, rather the reforms were to strengthen the existing system of governing. The future of Tibet from this perspective will depend on political and economic changes both at the national and international levels particularly western and Indian support for the Dalai Lama’s proposal. The support for the Dalai Lama and pressure on China has to be elevated to political and diplomatic level, and not confined to appreciation of Tibetan culture and religion alone. For now, the future of Tibet looks as uncertain as ever.