The end of the Second World War saw the collapse of the old imperial powers in Asia. The British were forced out of the Indian sub-continent and their imperial ambition reached a convenient end. The Japanese had been defeated and expelled from the Asian mainland, which led to the eventual victory of the communists in China. It was a shift in the balance of power that marked the beginnings of the demise of Tibet as an independent state.

When the Republic of China was founded, its authority in Tibet was virtually non-existent. One of the primary objectives of the Kuomintang was to restore its influence, and a number of missions were dispatched to Lhasa to re-establish relation with the Tibetans. The loss of Chinese influence was seen by the emerging Chinese nationalists as a proof of the modern imperialist attempts to undermine the Chinese nation, which, after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, was internally divided and militarily weak. The Chinese nationalists therefore could not put into practice their claim that China was a nation based on the 'unity of five races. The five races were Han, Manchu, Mongols, Uygurs and Tibetans. The nationalists did not mention the other ethnic groups that existed in China.
With the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, the Chinese Communists made it clear that they would not accept the KMT regime, and China slipped into a bloody civil war. The Tibetans, by now, were able to follow events after the end of war in some detail, in particular the Chinese civil war, and kept abreast of the new developments with the help of short-wave radios and some foreign newspapers. Although Tibetans initially discounted the Chinese Communists as a military and political force, events in China gradually forced a reassessment of this opinion.

The Communists gradually expanded the territory under their control: by July 1947 they had seized most of the formerly Japanese held territory in Manchuria, and by November 1947 they had launched an offensive that pushed the Nationalist forces entirely out of that area. In October 1949, the Communists assumed total control of China and occupied Peking on 31 January 1949. The news of their victory produced great pessimism and anxiety in Tibet, because the godless communists were considered to be a much greater threat to the Tibetans way of life than the Kuomintang.

One Tibetan aristocratic official recalled the attitude in Lhasa in 1949 and early 1950 as: we have dealt with the Kuomintang for long time and have seen that, whatever they say [about Tibet being a part of China], they could not put their ideas into practice. For example, they could not even send soldiers to accompany the
Panchen Rimapoche. They say they will do this and that but they never could do much... on the other hand, we know that the communists are very strong, for every day we hear that such and such is lost... These people really meant business.

On 1 October 1949, the People’s Republic of China was established and Chairman Mao proclaimed in Tiananmin Square, 'China has stood up, for nearly two centuries China had been wrecked by civil war, economic strife and western imperialist onslaughts... But now for the first time, a strong central government had emerged. This communist government was impelled by the two important socioeconomic phenomena of the twentieth country: Nationalism and Communism.

On coming to power, the communists made it clear that the last remaining task for the victorious People’s Liberation Army was the liberation of Tibet. The higher echelons of the Communist party had already developed strategies for the incorporation of what they regarded as ‘Chinese National minorities’ within the framework of the People’s Republic of China. The Commander-in-Chief of the PLA, Zhu De, in a speech to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on 24 September 1949, said: "the common programme demanded the waging of the revolutionary war to the very end and the liberation of all the territory of China, including, Formosa, the Pescadores, Hainan Island and Tibet."
On 29 September 1949, the common programme was unanimously approved by the National People's Congress. Thus, as far as the new Communist Government was concerned, Tibet was to be regarded as Chinese territory, and the Tibetans issue was to be dealt under the rubric of a 'National Ministry'.

When the Communists declared their intention to 'liberate' Tibet, in 1950 Tibet had, to all intents and purposes, been an independent state. It exercised full authority over its internal and external affairs, and the Tibetans saw no reasons why it should now succumb to the Communist propaganda. A month after, in October 1949, the Communists assumed total control of China. The Tsongdu (Tibetan National Assembly) met to discuss the Chinese threat. It was agreed that they should take various measures to counter Chinese propaganda. First they would make internal reforms to prepare for a possible Chinese attack. Second, they would seek to secure external support. And third, they would try to establish a dialogue with the Communists.

This chapter will undertake a content analysis of the diplomatic communication between China and Tibet, and Tibetan appeals to the world opinion and the UN, consequent to the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1950. The Tibetans, in an attempt to garner outside support against the Chinese invasions, appealed to the UN Secretary-General on 7 November 1950. The proposed draft
resolution asked not special committee to develop proposals for UN regarding actions that could be taken.

Requesting that 'invasion of Tibet by foreign forces' be added to the agenda of the UN's primary responsibility 'to maintain internal peace and security' as cited in paragraph of Article I of the UN Charter. EL Salvador's initiatives and action on behalf of Tibet in the UN forced India and Britain to weigh their own national interests carefully against their historical connections with Tibet, and their moral and legal obligation to assist her at this critical time.

The 'Liberation' of Tibet

The inauguration of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 brought China a powerful government for the first time in the twentieth century. The Chinese communist party's ideology emphasized reunification of China, one of the prime targets of which was the 'liberation' of Tibet and its reintegration with the "mother land". The Chinese Communists believed that Tibet's desire to be separate from China was caused by western imperialist interference in its affairs. The Chinese considered it not to be coincidental that the thirteenth Dalai Lama had expelled all Chinese from Tibet, and severed relations with China in 1913 only after he had spent two years in India and had developed a close friendship with the British diplomat Sir Charles Bell. They saw the
British Policy as an attempt either to eliminate or to reduce to token status all Chinese influence in Tibet, and saw the elimination of British “Imperialist influence” as critical to the restoration of what they considered to be China’s traditional hegemony over Tibet. Thus they repeatedly broadcast in both Chinese and Tibetan (the latter by the well-known geshe from Tsinghai province, Sherab Gyatso) that the Chinese People’s Liberation Army was going to liberate Tibet from the imperialists. On 1 October 1949, Mao proclaimed at Tiananmin Square: “Chinese people have stood up and long live the Chinese Communist Party”.

Dr Zhisui Li, his future doctor who had just come back after completing his studies abroad, later wrote that: “It was so full of joy, my heart nearly burst out of my throat, and tears welled up in my eyes. I was so proud of China, so full of hope, so happy that the exploitation and suffering, the aggression from foreigners, would be gone forever”.¹

The Chinese Communists, as soon as they came to power², announced their goals and objectives clearly and were always determined to take all the necessary measures including bluff, appeasement, blatant lies and, if necessary, the "barrel of the gun"


² We could even say from the time of 'the long march'
to achieve their objectives. For the victorious People’s Liberation Army, the last remaining task was the "liberation" of Tibet.

As early as August 1950, while the Tibetan delegation was waiting for the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi to start negotiating the fate of Tibet, Zhau Enlai told K M Panikkar, India’s Foreign Secretary to China, that "the liberation of Tibet was a ‘Sacred duty’ though he promised that the Chinese would secure their ends by negotiations and not by military action.³

The Communists not only believed in the incorporation of Tibet into China, they were also impelled by their revolutionary zeal to promote its socialist transformation to reestablish [their] international prestige.⁴ The question of Tibet was bound up with China’s perception of itself as a new nation, and of its international status. The Communists’ victory caused immediate alarm for the Tibetan ruling elite. But because of a lack of Chinese presence in Tibet, there was still time to make a last desperate attempt to secure its independence.

The external threat to Tibet’s status could not have come at a worse time. During the Dalai Lama’s authority, a regent ruled Tibet and this transitional period had always been a strain on the Tibetan


political system. The ruling elite, composed of the aristocracy and religious institutions, was deeply divided. “The period between 1913 and 1947 was a watershed in Tibetan history, during this period there would have been real scope for Tibet to have emerged as a ‘nation state’, provided the ruling elite had the foresight and willingness to adapt to the changes in the larger world. But the elites chose to remain oblivious to what was going on around them”.

Resistance to change came mainly from the religious community, which was opposed to any kind of reform that appeared to diminish its primacy. By 1949, therefore, the Tibetans were not equipped to oppose China either militarily or socially.

Yet the Tibetan society was neither stagnating nor on the verge of a collapse. There was a small group of Tibetans who were well informed about the international situation, and a few aristocrat families who had traveled outside Tibet, and they had sent their children to missionary schools in India. Through them, the center of Indo-Tibetan trade, Kalimpong, had become a window on the outside world. It was largely these people who imitated efforts to modernize Tibet’s army and administration. The immediate political reaction to the Chinese claims and to the victory of the Communists was to remove all remnants of Chinese authority in Tibet.

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desire to open an air link between Lhasa and some northern Indian cities. Above all the Tibetans sought to strengthen their army. Especially in March 1947, the Kashag asked the British government to supply a substantial amount of arms and ammunition, which was, approved by the British cabinet and the interim Indian government, with the exceptions of two anti-aircraft guns.\(^{11}\)

Moreover military expenditure was sanctioned to counter a Chinese offensive for which they look silver coins (Tangka) from the Potala treasury, to meet the costs of military pay and supplies.\(^{12}\) In August 1949, when the Indian Political officer in Sikkim, Mr. Harishwar Dayal, made a visit to Lhasa, Tibetans saw it as an opportunity to seek support from the Indian Government. They helped to establish a new relationship by drawing up a new treaty, which would supersede the 1914 Shimla Convention.\(^{13}\)

On 25 February 1949 a meeting was held in Gyantse between Depon Kunsangste and the representative of the GOI, Colonel Srinivasan to discuss training and weapon requirements.\(^{14}\)

\(^{11}\) India Office Records, L/P & S/12/2175, Tibet Supply of arms by GOI.


\(^{13}\) The 1914 Shimla Convention, which was initiated by three participants, China, Britain and Tibet, but was never signed. China refused to recognize the Convention. However, Tibet and Britain signed a joint declaration which acknowledged the Draft Convention to be binding on the two governments

The expulsion of the Chinese mission marked the beginning of a new phase in the Sino-Tibetan relationship. By serving its ties with China, Tibet had emphatically declared its desire to remain independent. On the other hand, this provocation made the Communists even more determined to gain control of Tibet. It was evident that China and Tibet had irreconcilable objectives. The question that was to dominate the first months of 1950 were whether reconciliation could be achieved through diplomacy or by coercion. Both the Communists and the Nationalists objected led to the decision to expel the Chinese mission in Lhasa which was seen by the Communists as evidence of Chinese authority over Tibet, and left no doubt about the Communists' view regarding the status of Tibet. Moreover both the Kuomintang and the Communist first that the Indian mission in Lhasa, and particularly Huge Richardson, was responsible for the incident.\(^6\) Huge Richardson noted that 'this gesture was apparently intended to provide evidence that his removal was by force'.\(^7\)

Therefore, a month after the Communist assumed total control of China, the Tsongdu; (the Tibetan National Assembly) met to discuss the Chinese threat and worked on various measures to counter its propaganda.

\(^6\) Melvyn Goldstein, Demise of the Lamaist State: A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951 (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1989) p.613. He says that the idea originated with Ngabo, but Phuntsoj Tashi Talka told him that Ngabo was not involved at all in this episode.

\(^7\) FO, 371-76315: MR, 1 August 1948.
First, major internal changes were endorsed by the Regent Taktra in 1949. The Kashag was reorganized into three separate ministries; external affairs, defense, and pay and supplies, and ‘as a matter of urgency they were given power to act without consultation with the National Assembly’. The Kashag also decided they needed to monitor international news. Heinrich Herrer, an Austrian refugee who was living in Lhasa at the time, was asked to listen to the radio and provide the government with daily summaries of international news. 9

And for number of years the Tibetan government had been setting up a network of wireless communication systems throughout Tibet. And in 1950, Radio Lhasa broadcast to the world for the first time, in the beginning for only half an hour a day. The news was read in Tibetan by Rimshi Rasa Gyagen and in Chinese by Phuntsog Tashi. Takla, the Dalai Lama’s brother-in-laws, and in English by Reginald Fox. The primary purpose of the broadcasts was to counter Chinese propaganda and on 31 January 1950, Lhasa Radio rejected Beijing’s claim that Tibet was part of China. The Broadcast declared that Tibet had been ‘independent since 1912 when the Manchu garrison had been driven out’ 10

The National Assembly agreed to the opening of the country for motor traffic between India and Tibet. Tibet also expressed a

9 Ibid.
10 SWB, 1950, No 42. p. 43
Initially, the government wanted to raise the number of soldiers to 100,000 but it proved impractical because of the unwillingness of the people who could afford to bribe recruiting officers to avoid serving.\textsuperscript{15}

The attempts to modernize Tibet's polity and the army came too late. Limited resources and the lack of a modern infrastructure hampered any military or civil defensive measures that the Tibetans adopted, and there was no way that the Tibetans would have been able to resist a determined Chinese attack. Nevertheless, the Tibetans did their best to show the Chinese their determination to resist invasion. The ruling elite realized that the best chance for Tibet's survival lay in outside support. The Tibetans had already opened the country to a number of outsiders, now they appealed directly to the international community. Britain had dealt with Tibet as an independent country, but it had never afforded Tibet the \textit{de jure} recognition it sought. On the other hand, neither had the British recognized.

As far as the Tibetans were concerned, the status of Tibet was governed by the 1914 Shamble Convention. However fragile it might be, the Convention provided some sort of definition of Tibet's status. In late 1949 and early 1950, the primary objective of Tibetan foreign policy was to maintain the status quo, whereby Tibet would have total control over its internal affairs and would maintain some kind

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
of external personality. For many years the Tibetan Government had sought international recognition and visibility. In 1948 the Kashag dispatched a high-level trade delegation abroad in order to show Tibetan independence. The trade mission secured a major diplomatic coup when the United Kingdom and United States issued visas on Tibetan passports. This was tantamount to official recognition of Tibet's independent status.16

Tibet seeks International Support

During the transition to an independent Indian Government, which began in September 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru, as a vice-president in the interim Indian government and Premier in-charge of external affairs,17 and the Indian Council of World Affairs decided to convene a semi-official conference of Asian countries the following spring18

Delegates from academic circles and observers from governments from thirty-two countries were invited. The British representative in Lhasa, who told the Tibetans that this would be a

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17 Subimal Dutt cited in Melvyn Goldstein, op. cit. p. 561.

18 FO, 371-63539, dispatch no. 13 from the United Kingdom High Commissioner in India to the Secretary to the Cabinet, London, dated 30 January 1947.
good opportunity publicly to demonstrate Tibet's de facto independence before all the neighbouring Asian countries, conveyed the invitation to the Tibetan government.\footnote{Sambo Rimshi, interview cited in Melvyn Goldstein, op. cit., p. 561.}

The Tibetans appointed Teiji Sambo and Khencung Lobsang Wang-chug to lead the delegation, which left Lhasa in early March 1947.\footnote{The other members included two interpreters, Kyibu and Kapshobasey. Two scholar monks (geshes) Tsidrung Kunga and Sambo Sey also went in case any discussions or questions arose regarding religion. See Goldstein, op. cit. p.561.}

When the Tibetan delegation went to New Delhi, where they met Nehru and gave him letters from the Kashag and the regents, Nehru made it clear and informed the delegation that no political decisions were going to be made and asked them not to raise any issues regarding boarders or political status. The only political talks they had with the foreign ministers however were about Indo-Tibetan trade issues.\footnote{The Kashag had instructed the delegation to request the Indian Foreign Office to rescind the rule whereby Tibetans needed permits from the political officer of Sikkim to buy such items as cloth, yarn, thread, or cigarettes, since Tibetans were being required to give gift (bribes) before such permits were issued and this was causing hardship. ibid.} Though the Chinese were objecting to their presence on the grounds that there was no need for a Tibetan delegation, and the Chinese could make the decisions for Tibet, but from the Tibetan point of view, attending an international
conference as an equal with China was a major recognition of their de facto independent status. The only concession they gained from India was the withdrawal of a map of Asia that showed Tibet as separate from China.\textsuperscript{22}

At the very time when Tibet was most in need of internal unity in order to confront the threat of a unified China, the failures of the Tibetan political system were most manifest. The Dalai Lama had not yet attained maturity and the country was still ruled by the Regent Taktra. Taktra's high ethical standards had slipped, but he was still far superior in that regard to Reting. Taktra, unlike Reting, remained strongly anti-Chinese. Unfortunately, Reting chose this time to attempt to regain the Regency. While Tibet was engaged in a mini-civil war between the supporters of Taktra and Reting, the actual civil war in China was reaching a conclusion that posed a new threat to Tibet. In anticipation of a communist victory in China, Tibet intensified its efforts to achieve international recognition and support. The Tibetan Finance Ministry initiated the idea of sending a trade mission to India, Britain and the United States, whose purpose would be to improve trade relations and to purchase gold to back up the Tibetan currency. The proposed mission, led by

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
W.D. Shakabpa, had other important goals, including international recognition of Tibetan official passport.\textsuperscript{23}

The possibility of a Communist victory in the civil war in China gave Tibet a new strategy significance. Tibet was thought to form a potential bulwark, both geographically and ideologically, to the spread of communism in Asia: In a central position in a continent threatened by soviet expansionism and torn by internal strife in its two must populous countries, China and India, the people of Tibet will probably resist soviet influence and other disruptive forces longer than any other Asiatic people. The conservative and religious nature of the Tibetan people and the relatively firm control exercised to produce comparatively stable conditions in a vast area completely. Surrounded by territories seriously affected by political upheavals of Soviet schemes of aggrandizement.

The seeming aversion of the Tibetans to Communist doctrines may tend to counteract the effect of communist activities in many parts of Asia, for the Dalai Lama’s influence extends to

\textsuperscript{23} Shakabpa was aware that gold sales were made only between sovereign states (having been informed of that fact by Sudyam cutting an American who visited Lhasa in 1935) and was intent upon purchasing gold from the US even though gold from Mexico was available at a lower price. Since that would imply that the US recognized that Tibet was independent. Goldstein, op. cit., p. 596. Shakabpa himself stated that the purpose of the mission was to “open formal relations with other nations of the world” and to “demonstrate” independent and sovereign status. See also Shakabpa, Tibet: A Political History (New York: Potala Publication, 1984), p. 295.
followers far beyond the borders of Tibet. Tibet may therefore be regarded as a bulwark against the spread of communism throughout Asia, or at least as an island of conservatism in a sea of political turmoil, and a gesture of friendship from the United States might go a long way towards encouraging the Tibetans to resist possible soviet or communist infiltration into the Tibetan plateau which, in an age of rocket warfare, might prove the most important territory in all Asia.

When the trade mission traveled to India, Tibet had not yet recognized the transition from British to Indian government, due to its uncertainties as to the future relations with both Britain and India, and true to its claim to Tawang. The Indian government refused to release US dollars, which Tibet had earned through its exports to the United States and which the mission hoped to use to purchase gold.24 The mission traveled to Hongkong, on British visas issued on their Tibetan passports, but was required by the Chinese to accept, “Chinese papers” to enter China25 and declined the offer of $50,000 in order to attend the Chinese National Assembly on Chinese passport by the Tibetan delegation.

24 India paid Tibet in Indian rupees for Tibetan exports to other countries through Calcutta and kept the foreign exchange earned for its own use. This was one of the problems of the mission.

25 Shakabpa claimed that these papers were in the form of a “Letter of initiation” from China, not Chinese passports. Cited in Goldstein, op. cit., p. 579.
The US Embassy at Nanking agreed to issue visas to the United States on the Tibetan's passports, but told them they would have to first obtain exit visas from China. Since Chinese exit visas would only be issued on their Chinese papers, the mission traveled to Hongkong, where they recessed US visas on their Tibetan passports upon arrival in the United States, the mission occasioned an immediate protest from the Chinese Embassy in Washington to the effect that:

1. The Tibetan authorities have no authority to deal with other nation as an independent country.

2. The Tibetan trade mission is in possession of Tibetan travel documents rather than Chinese passports, which they should bear. The Chairman of the Mission, Shakabpa, has no authority to negotiate directly with the United States Government.

3. The United States Government has always recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and the Chinese Government is amazed at the acceptance by the American Consul General at Hongkong of Tibetan Travel documents. The Chinese Government wishes to know whether the American Consul General at Hongkong

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26 The State Department had previously decided that the mission would issue US visas not on their passports but on Form-257 (for persons from countries the US did not recognize). The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in India, 28 October 1947, FRUS, 1947, Vol. VII, 601. This message was communicated to India, before it was known where the mission would apply for their American visas, but was apparently not received or was misinterpreted by the US Consulate in Hongkong.
issued the visas on his own initiative or he was authorized to do so by the United States Government. If he were authorized by the United States Government to issue these visas, the Chinese Government would wish to be informed whether the United States Government has changed its “usual attitude toward Tibet”. The mission also requested a meeting with the US President in order to deliver letters and gifts from the Dalai Lama, and the Chinese protested this unless the mission were accompanied by the Chinese ambassador, which the Tibetans refused. The mission met with the Secretary of State, George Marshall, and he was careful to reiterate US recognition of “China’s de jure sovereignty over Tibet,” but pointed out that “the fact that it extends no de facto authority over Tibet is root cause of [the] situation.” Marshall went on to state that President Truman had “expressed personal interest in greeting Tibetans,” and that “if it should become known that their intended call on President was frustrated by the Chinese government, the press would make the most of the situation to China’s

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27 Memorandum by chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs, 12 July 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. VII, 759. The Chinese Embassy went on to offer to facilitate the mission under China's auspices but requested that it not be dealt with as "representative of an independent state". The US State Department informed the Chinese Embassy that, as per its instruction, the visas had not been issued on the Tibetan's passports but on Form-257. Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs, 16 July 1948, FRUS, 1948, Vol. VII, 763. This, however, is clearly not the case, as the photocopy of Shakabpa's passport reveals. Shakabpa, op. cit., p. 370.

28 Shakapa pointed out that, in 1943, the US contacted Tibet (Tolstoy and Dolan mission) without consulting with the Chinese Memorandum by Division of Chinese Affairs, 2 August 1948, FRUS, 1848, vol., 771.
disadvantage. Such story might also be raised in light of self-determination, which is popular concept among American people."  

Marshall recommended that the Tibetans be allowed to purchase gold from the US Treasury since that would not "constitute an impairment of United States recognition of China's de jure sovereignty over Tibet, since the Department does not intend that such a sale would affect the continuation of this Government's "recognition of China's de jure sovereignty over Tibet." The Tibetan mission also met with General Eisenhower, the then President of Columbia University.  

The trade mission next traveled to Great Britain, on visas issued on their Tibetan passports in China (which the Britain attempted to refuse, stating that the issuance in China had been a

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29 The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China, 28 July 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. VII, 767. The meeting with secretary Marshall was entirely innocuous in a political sense, since the Tibetans confined themselves to trade issues. Memorandum of Conversation by the Secretary of State, 6 August 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. VII.775. Shakabpa's strategy seems to have been to achieve recognition of Tibet's political status informally, by implication, through trade agreements, rather than by open recognition, which was hardly likely in any case.

30 Secretary of State to the Secretary of the Treasury, 27 August 1948 FRUS, 1948, vol., VII, 780 in the words, that whatever the usual legal implications of such a sale this was an exception not intended to affect US policy toward China or Tibet. The US refused to grant a loan to Tibet to be used to purchase the gold (to be repaid when India released Tibetan foreign exchange). Secretary of State to the leader of the Tibetan trade mission (Shakabpa), 27 September 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. VII, 785.

31 The purpose of this meeting, arranged by Llya Tolstoy, was that Eisenhower could thank the Tibetans for their assistance in recovering the crew of an American transport plane that crashed in Tibet during the war. Shakabpa, op. cit., p. 297.
"technical error"), where they were treated as a strictly trade mission and isolated from public notice. After returning to India, the mission managed to secure the release of $250,000 from the Indian Government and finally purchased gold worth $425,800 from the US Government. 32 The US ambassador in India informed the trade missions that, as it was the policy of the US to recognize Chinese Suzerainty over Tibet, "for the present relation between Tibet and United States would have to be strengthened by indirect mean."33 Perhaps the greatest success of the mission was in demonstrating Tibet's intention to conduct its affairs independently this was especially important for the Americans, who had little previous awareness of Tibet's desire for independence of China. The State Department thought Tibet worthy of support if China should fall to the Communists, in that case it was thought better to treat Tibet as independent rather than as a part of communist China. On the negative side, however, was the long-standing policy of the United States to respect the territorial integrity of China, and US opposition to Soviet influence in Mongolia. (The US did not

32 India remained unconvinced that the gold was not intended for private use, to be smuggled into India where the price was much higher than official rates. Ambassador in India to the secretary of State, 31 may 1949, FRUS, 1949, vol. IX, 1075.

33 Memorandum of office of Far Eastern Affairs to the Division of Chinese Affairs, 12 April, FRUS, 1949, vol. IX, 1065. What these "indirect means" would entail was not specified. The author of the memorandum pointed out the vagueness of the terminology of "suzerainty", noting that it was difficult to draw a precise line of demarcation between suzerainty and sovereignty. It was thought desirable "to avoid a possible controversy over 'suzerainty' by referring in future to Chinese de jure authority over Tibet or some similar comprehensive term." ibid, Vol. IX, p.1069.
recognize the Mongolian People's Republic at that time and opposed Mongolia's admission to the UN.\textsuperscript{34}

The US realized that it could do little to support Tibet politically or militarily, especially without the cooperation of India, which secured disinclined to become involved, while moral support alone might achieve results apposite to those intended: "By recognizing Tibet as independent while we are not in position to give Tibet the necessary practical support, because of its remoteness, we may in fact be pointing the may for communist absorption of the area".\textsuperscript{35} The State Department finally recommended a position that in its half hearted support for Tibet was reminiscent of former British policies: "we should accordingly maintain a friendly attitude toward Tibet in ways short of giving China cause for offense".\textsuperscript{36} However, the US Embassy in India, always more ready to support Tibet than the State Department, pointed out that the US recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet only because of the US policy of supporting KMT, and stated that:

\textsuperscript{34} Memorandum by Miss Ruth E. Bacon of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs to the Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs, 12 April 1949, \textit{FRUS, 1949}, vol. IX, 1066.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid; p.1066.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 1070. The US did think that Tibet had a legitimate cause for complaint against India in regard to the foreign exchange issue. Since Tibet was a land-locked country with possibilities of trade and transit only through China, India or Soviet territory, India's policy was thought likely to drive Tibet into the arms of the Soviet or Chinese, as well as being "contrary to the principles of freedom of international trade and intercourse which we are espousing" ibid, p. 1068.
The extension of communist control over Tibet would adversely affect the overall position of the United States versus would Communism United States policy toward Tibet is defined as the recognition by the United States of Chinese sovereignty over the country. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the adoption of this policy was our desire to strengthen the [Nationalist]. The Chinese Government, in view of the strong ties of friendship between the United States and China, and forestall in so far as it would be possible for us to do so the fragmentation of greater China which would result if Sinkiang and Tibet were to be recognized or treated as independent political units. I am not certain that the foregoing policy is best adapted to further American interests if the communists are successful in their efforts to obtain control of the Chinese government. 37

Despite last minute Tibetan efforts to achieve some international recognition of Tibet's actual independence of China, and lost-minute limited states interest in making a stand against international Communism in Tibet, the period of the Reting and Taktra regencies ended with Tibet little prepared to withstand the Chinese diplomatically or militarily. Some efforts were made,

37 Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the secretary of State, 12 April 1949, FRUS, 1949, vol. IX, p.1072. The ambassador suggested that contacts with Tibet should be immediately improved since, “if we make no effort to demonstrate a friendly interest in Tibet until a Communist dominated regime consolidate its hold on China, the impression will be created among the Tibetans that we were moved only by a desire to contain communism and not to develop cordial relations with the Tibetan people” ibid, 1073.
especially by the Tsongdu, to heed the advice of the Thirteen Dalai Lama, but the weakness of the Tibetan political system in the absence of a ruling Dalai Lama was apparent. The British policy of recognizing Tibetan “autonomy” under Chinese “suzerainty” left Tibet in 1950 with no international recognition of its de facto independence of China, while China retained international recognition of its authority over Tibet. However, the evolution of Tibetan national consciousness and the Tibetan desire for independence are evident in Tibet’s most significant political statements of this period.

The approach adopted by the National Assembly and the Kashag was two-pronged. First, to seek admission to the United Nations, and second, missions were dispatched to Nepal, India, USA and UK to seek support for independence which would determine the future course of Tibet’s history and therefore, it was decided that the members of the mission should be selected by divine intervention.  

International Recognition and Support for Tibet

By 1949, the need for International support and recognition was more urgent than ever before. It appeared on the surface that Tibet’s attempt to gain international support might achieve some success. Britain and India had shown interests in maintaining the

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38 Among member of the Kashag is known as Kalon Lama (bka-blon bla ma). Melvyn Gold Stein, op.cit pp. 626-7.
status quo, and the GOI had agreed to supply arms and ammunition, and provide training. The British had written to the Tibetan government stating that 'His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom will continue to take a friendly interest in the future prosperity of the Tibetan people, in the maintenance of Tibetan autonomy'. They went on to say that Britain 'hopes that the Tibetan government will agree to a continuance of the present friendly contacts for which they would wish to provide an arrangement for visits to Lhasa to be paid from time to time by the United Kingdom's High Commissioner in New Delhi or a member of his staff'. Britain wanted to send a special mission to Lhasa, to show that it had not lost interest in Central Asia as a result of handling over their power in India.39

But the mission was 'postponed on account of India's unenthusiastic reaction to the project.' It was considered by some that 'it would also lend weight to the Chinese Communists' allegation of imperialist plots in Tibet'.40 Despite the fact that the British mission to Lhasa did not take place, the Tibetans were convinced that Britain was interested in maintaining some form of relationship with Tibet, and the Kashag therefore felt that with British backing they would be able to secure support from the international community.

40 IBID.p.17.
The most important mission was the delegation to China. It was headed by Tsipon Shakabpa, Wangchuk Deden and a monk official, Khenchung Thupten Gyalpo Shakabpa with his knowledge and experience of international politics, and was assisted by Kusho Driyul, Tsetrung, Lobsang Nyenda and Geshe Lodro Gyato, who represented the monastic organization. Two interpreters were also appointed: Phustong Tashi Takla, who acted as Chinese translator, and Taring Dzasa, the English translator. Shakabpa showed some reluctance to go to China as when he had visited in 1948 as the leader of the trade mission, had deceived the Chinese by informing them that the trade mission would not go to the United States and Britain.

A month after the Communists came to power in China, the Tibetan Foreign Bureau wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Benin, seeking support. The Foreign Bureau enclosed the copy of a letter that had been sent to Chairman Mao, which declared that Tibet was an independent country and that the new government should observe the established boundary. The letter to Benin pointed out the growing threat of communism and stated that: 'we would be most grateful if you would please consider extensive aid in respect of requirements for Civil and Military

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42 Tsering Shakya, op.cit. p. 17.
purposes and kindly let us have a favourable reply at your earliest possible opportunity.\(^{43}\)

On 3 December 1949, the *Kashag* sent a telegram to the British government requesting support for the admission of Tibet into the UN stating that,

As Tibet being an Independent State we have no danger from other foreign countries but in view of the spread of communism and their success as in China, there is now an imminent danger of communist aggression towards Tibet. As all the world knows that Tibet and communist China can not have any common sympathy by reason of religion and principles of life which are just the opposite, therefore in order to defend our country against impending threat of communist invasion and also to preserve our future independence and Freedom, we consider it must essential for Tibet to secure admission of her membership in the United Nations General Assembly we are sending special mission to Great Britain in this connection but, in the meantime we shall be must grateful to you and His Majesty's Government if you would kindly help us and place our humble appeal to the United Nation immediately through your good office so that Tibet could take her place in the United Nation as a member state kindly take immediate action and wire reply.\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) FO 371-76317 ibid, p.17.

The possibility of Tibet entering the UN was immediately ruled out as Tibet’s application would have been vetoed by the Russian and Chinese National representatives. However, Britain wanted to find out the views of the United States and India. The State Department told the British Ambassador, Sir Oliver Frank, that the US government had adopted a similar approach and the State Department had proposed to discourage the Tibetan Government from expecting any assistance. 'There was little likelihood that the administration would take a serious interest in the Tibetan request and that he thought the problem could be more properly be left in the hands of India and the United Kingdom', as Frank was told.\textsuperscript{45}

While the US thought the matter should be left to Britain and India, Britain felt that it was a matter solely for India. An official at the Foreign Office, J.L. Taylor, commented that, 'It would not be possible, even if we wished to do so, to make Tibet a member of the UN. In any case we regard Tibet as primarily India’s responsibility and should make it clear to both India and Tibet as soon as possible. We ought however to back India in any action we can persuade her to do'.\textsuperscript{46}

When the British approached the GOI, the Ministry of External Affairs told the British High Commission that it had not

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46} FO 371-76314.ibid p.19.
received a request form the Tibetan Government, and therefore saw no reason to act. Furthermore, the GOI did not want to get ‘involved in British–Tibetan dialogue’ because K.P.S. Menon, the Indian Foreign Secretary, believed that this would be ‘lending colour to Peking radio allegations of Anglo-Indian ganging up over Tibet by our acting together in this way.’\textsuperscript{47} Moreover he said that some Indian officials were of the opinion that India should gracefully withdraw from Tibet and Menon particularly mentioned that Sardar Panikkar had advised that India should ‘wash her hands completely off Tibet’.\textsuperscript{48}

As far as Britain was concerned, interest in the part had been the result of the need to secure its position in India. Now that strategic consideration had devolved to the GOI, there were relatively few British economic interests in the country. British officials were thus quick to recognize that Tibet was redundant to their interests. A pragmatic Foreign office staff told me: ‘therefore to consider that any attempt to intervene in Tibet would be impractical and unwise. We have no interest in the area sufficiently strong to justify the certain risks involved in our embroiling ourselves with the Chinese on this question.’\textsuperscript{49} The refusal of the British

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. p.19.

\textsuperscript{48} FO371-76314, ibid, p.21.

government and others to provide any kind of assistance, in the words of the Dalai Lama, was 'terribly disheartening.'

The Tibetans had thought that at least because of past relations, Britain was in a unique position to help them. However, the Tibetan mission to the UK was recalled and the project was abandoned by the end of January. As far as Britain was concerned, its interests in Tibet had reached a natural end. Now the bases of British support to Tibet was limited to supporting Indian policy in Tibet.

**The American Interest in Tibet**

The Tibetans were aware of the growing power of the US and its dominance in the international scenario. By early 1950, Tibetans had begun to turn towards the United States for assistance, and its relations with America had improved as a result of the 1948 visit of the Tibetan trade mission, which had noted an encouraging attitude among the American officials and public. It therefore seemed natural to the Tibetans to foster better relations with the Americans.

At the same time, the developments on the Tibetan plateau had not gone unnoticed in America. The Communist takeover of

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China had meant that the US could no longer regard Tibet as an area of minor concern. After the establishment of the Communist Government in China, the relationship between the USA and the People's Republic of China deteriorated. The primary concern of the US was the expansion of the USSR and communism in Asia.

In January 1949, the American Ambassador in India, Roy Henderson, told Shakapba that the US would ‘strengthen’ relations between the two countries.\(^{52}\) The US Embassy in Delhi had advised the State Department that in the event of a communist victory in China, the US ‘should be prepared to treat Tibet as an independent state to all intents or purposes.’\(^{53}\) The State Department was not prepared to go that far. However, there was a general agreement about ‘establishing some sort of contact with the government of Tibet’.\(^{54}\) The rapid communist advances in China prompted Ambassador Henderson to write to the Secretary of State, on 2 July 1949, suggesting a reconsideration of the Tibet policy.

On 19 November 1949, Surkang Depon met counselor Howard Donavan from the US Embassy in Delhi. Surkhang handed a copy of a letter from the Tibetan Bureau to Chairman Mao and a letter to the Secretary of State, which stated, ‘in the event that Mao ignores the Tibetan letter and takes an aggressive attitude by sending his troops towards Tibet, the government of Tibet will be

\(^{52}\) FRUS, Vol.IX,1949,p.1065.  
\(^{53}\) ibid.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 1075.
obliged to defend its own country by all possible means. Therefore the government of Tibet would earnestly desire to request every possible help from your government⁵⁵

On 3 December 1949, the Kashag dispatched a telegram to the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheron, which stated that Communism and the Tibetan way of life were totally incompatible and that China was a serious danger to Tibet. Therefore, 'in order to defend our country against the impending threat of communist invasion and also to preserve our future independence and freedom, we consider it most essential for Tibet to secure admission to the UN General Assembly.'

The United States, however, was becoming more interested in the Tibetan question. Now that Chiang Kai-Shek had fallen, the Tibetans could be seen (and used) as an anti-Communist force in Asia. The State Department asked the US Ambassador in India to ask the British high commissioner discreetly what and how much military aid India was giving to Tibet and the Americans discreetly asked the Indians their opinions of a US plan to send a mission to Tibet. This suggestion, of course, prompted a negative reply from Nehru who said that; "it could do more harm than good end might hasten a communist invasion".⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 1081.

⁵⁶ FRUS, 793B. D2/1-2050, report of discussion with K.P.S Menon cited in a telegram from the US Ambassador in India to the US Secretary of state dated 20 January, 1950, and FRUS, 793b 56/3-150, telegram from the US State Department to the US Embassy in India, dated 1 March 1950.
Essential for Tibet was to secure her membership to the UN General Assembly. It went on to state that the Tibetan government wished to send a special mission to the US. In order to remedy this situation, the British Foreign Office and the American State Department wanted to send covert missions to Tibet to get first hand information. Their main problem was that they “were discouraged by the GOI which at present has a practical monopoly on Tibet’s foreign relations”, as Henderson, the American Ambassador to India put it in a cable to Dean Acheron, the US Secretary of State. Ultimately the proposed visit had to be postponed until after the winter and finally abandoned in 1950 due to the changed situation in China and the communist threat to Tibet. But the fact remanded that in 1949 India had ‘a practical monopoly’ of Tibetan foreign relation and communications.

It appears that when Pannikkar returned from Nanking, he informed his government that Tibet “was wide open from [the] east and any effort to help Tibet would mainly involve India in conflict with the communists”.

Several times, the British High Commission reminded the Government of India that India was “the heir of British policy of preserving integrity of Tibet”. The British even proposed to “furnish GOI arms and equipment for [the] latter to give to Tibet”. The

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57 Ibid., p.p. 1087-8. The text of the letter was similar to one, which had been sent to Ernest Bevin.

British Government was ready to give a "guarantee of support in case of complications with Chinese communists".\(^{59}\)

The American Government was certainly interested in such a proposal. But the government of India's position was too vague to be of any help for the Tibetans. When on 16 November, the Indian Prime Minister was asked in a press conference about the position of Tibet in relation to India, he declared that:

About the position of Tibet, I may say that for the last 40 years or so, that is to say, during the regime of the British in India, certain autonomy of Tibet was recognized by the then Government of India and there were direct relations between Tibet and India. As regard China's position in Tibet, a vague kind of suzerainty was recognized. All these things were never clearly defined as to what have remained vague in that way. We have a representative in Lhasa. We trade with them directly but in a vague sense. We have repeated the fact of China's suzerainty. How far it goes, one does not know.\(^{60}\)

The word 'vague' was used in a sentence five times. It is difficult to define better the position of Nehru's government vis-à-vis Tibet at the end of 1949. Unfortunately this 'vagueness' prevailed

\(^{59}\) FRUS, Telegram 893.00/11-2149 from the Charge' in India (Donavan) to the Secretary of State, New Delhi, November 21, 1949.

\(^{60}\) SWJN, Series II, Vol. 14, p. 191
up to the fatal day in 1962. However, Sardar Patel was not in favour of vagueness, and in June he wrote to Nehru:

We have to strengthen our position in Sikkim as well as in Tibet. The further we keep away the Communist forces, the better Tibet has long been detached from China. I anticipate that as soon as the Communist have established themselves in the rest of China they will try to destroy its antonymous existence you have to consider carefully your policy towards Tibet in such a circumstance and prepare from now for that eventuality.  

One point was clear that the Government of India was not ready to get involved in a full-fledged military operation in Tibet. However, in the summer of 1949, the Chief of Army Staff sent a young intelligence officer to survey the eventual routes that could be used to bring troops and ammunition in the event of a political decision to defend Tibet.

The fact that this covert mission took place with the knowledge of the Foreign Secretary of India, is proof that in the summer of 1949, the government of India was still keeping all its

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61 The comment of Sardar Patel about Tibet had come after a letter from Attlee to Nehru about the danger for Hongkong of the Communist victory. Patel had written to Nehru: "as regards Attlee's letter to you, if I may suggest, you might send the draft reply to me before dispatching it to London. It was possible 1 May be able to offer some useful suggestions." But Nehru did not think so and replied: "The reply to Attlee about Hongkong has already been sent... Meanwhile, the communists in China are behaving very correctly towards the foreigners and even business in continuing to some extent"
options open. A few months later, the America Charge de 'Affairs
was told by San Jeni, an Indian intelligence official that "it was
decided [that the] most GOI could do was to send a moderate
supply [of] small arms plus a few officers to instruct Tibetans how
to use them". Though the governments of the US and UK agreed
with the Government of India on many strategic considerations
regarding an attack on Tibet, the main concern of the western
powers was the Indian tendency to "throw up its hands and to say
nothing could be done and retire to its own frontiers." The western
diplomats felt that there was "too much of a tendency in that
direction" on India's part.62

Towards the end of 1949, the opinion among most of the
western Diplomats in Delhi and in particular of Ralph Stevenson,
the British High Commissioner, was that Mao would not "for some
considerable time wish to face cost and difficulty of mounting
expedition into Tibet, where no great material advantage was to be
derived".63 Western analysts believed that the Communists would
leave Tibet alone for a long time and that the only threat Tibet
might face in the near future was the communist infiltration that
would eventually weaken Tibet from within. However, everyone in
Delhi was conscious of the danger of the Tibetan Kashag provoking

62 USFR, Telegram 893.00 Tibet/11-2249 from the Charge in India
(Donovan) to the secretary of state New Delhi, November 22, 1949

63 USFR, telegram 893.00 Tibet/11-2349 from the Charge in India
(Donovan) to the secretary of state, New Delhi, November 23, 1949.
the new Chinese government through the kind of letter it had sent to Mao demanding the return of its border territories.

The Tibetan government had little experience in diplomacy. What further complicated the situation was that the big monasteries could not understand that Tibet was not in a position to twist anyone's arm or to make demands for 'lost' territories either from India (in 1947) or from China.

In the meantime, Acheson wanted to put pressure in India to take a stronger stand. In a cable to Henderson, he stated, "Department suggests you may find opportunity use commie threat Tibet to emphasize GOI dangers to India itself arising from commie China and unrealism of semi-detached attitude of India respecting developments in China". Many in the Indian Government were not at all concerned by the Communist threat. In their view the new regime in Beijing was far superior to the old Nationalist regime, and a dose of communism was considered by many, such as Pannikkar, as a blessing for Tibet. Tibet had no friends. The fate of the peaceful religious nation was not the concern of any great power. A paper from the British Foreign office clearly stated that: "while British were still interested in Tibet maintaining its autonomy, Tibetan problem is almost exclusively of concern to India."64

64 USRF, Telegram 893.00 Tibet/12-1249 from the change in the United Kingdom (Holmes) to the Secretary of State London, December 12, 1949.
By now Tibetans had understood that the Indian Government was the key, they requested some assurances from it. They realized that even if the Americans or the British wanted to help, they could not do so without the active support and collaboration of the Government of India. One interesting point to note is that at the end of 1949, the British believed that Tibet was an independent nation though they were not ready to recognize it for the fear of rocking the boat. This was confirmed by a cable from Henderson to Acheson,\textsuperscript{65} which said, "during the conversation Mr. Graves showed me a Hansard report of December 14, 1949, in which was published a letter from Mr. Eden to Dr. T V Soong\textsuperscript{66} under date of 5 August 1943 and an accompanying memorandum setting forth the British position with respect to Tibet. Mr. Graves stated that it was his view that this still represented the British position in regard to Tibet".\textsuperscript{67}

The American Ambassador rightly doubted that the Indian Government would bargain for the recognition of Beijing regime against the guarantee of respect for Tibetan autonomy.\textsuperscript{68} Though


\textsuperscript{66} ibid., pp. 214-215.

\textsuperscript{67} Telegram 893.00 Tibet/12-2149. Memorandum of Conservation with the Director of the office of Chinese Affairs (Sprouse Washington) December 21, 1949, pp. 285

\textsuperscript{68} In fact the Note was written one day before the Indian recognition of new Beijing regime (31 December 1949).
the Indian officer said that his Government had not yet decided about the Tibetan application to the UN, it is quite certain that it was out of question. Nehru's priority was the sponsorship of Communist China's entry in the UN and the Security Council.

The Government of India thought that after recognizing the Chinese Communist government, they could 'initiate diplomatic talks' with the Chinese regarding the status of Tibet. On 16 November 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru said in a press conference that “India has always recognized the suzerainty of the Chinese government over Tibet, but Tibet is considered as an autonomous unit and India's dealings with Tibet are on that basis.”69 As the end of 1949 neared, certain conclusion could be drawn. First, India recognized Tibet more or less as an independent country. The political officer in Sikkim was dealing directly with the Tibetan Foreign Bureau in Lhasa and not through Beijing for all political and diplomatic matters related to Tibet. Another proof of Tibet's status in the early years after India's independence was that New Delhi was supplying arms and ammunition directly to Lhasa. However, the Government of India was not ready to get involved in a full-fledged war on the Tibetan high plateau.

Thus, as the impending confrontation between Tibet and China drew nearer, Tibet had already been written off by both Britain and India. Both pursued a policy of verbal support for

Tibetan autonomy while withholding meaningful diplomatic and military aid.

**Tibet's Appeal to the UN and the 'Seventeen-point Agreement'**

With 40,000 PLA soldiers on standby before marching into Lhasa, there were very little the Tibetans could do to counter the Communist advance. The Chinese knew that in terms of military force, nothing could stop them from reaching Lhasa. However, they made a tactical decision to obtain some legitimacy for the entry of the Chinese troops into Tibet’s capital. They did so by inviting the Tibetans to send a delegation to negotiate with the Beijing authorities.

Tibet’s repeated appeals to India and Britain were fruitless. At the same time, Tibet could not do without an international support though it was all too clear that the world’s attention was gripped by the Korean War. The final and the only diplomatic recourse open for the Tibetans were to approach the United Nations. They hoped against hope that the moral weight of the UN could be brought to bear on China.

On 7 November 1950, the Kashag instructed Shakabpa to make an urgent appeal to the United Nations. The Tibetans were aware of the UN’s actions in Korea, where it had taken military action to push back the North Korean invasion of South Korea. It was hoped that the UN might be urged to put pressure on China to
withdraw its forces from Tibet. However, there were major obstacles facing the Tibetan appeal. First, neither Tibet nor the People's Republic of China were member states of the UN. Second, none of the major powers was willing to sponsor a discussion on Tibet in the General Assembly. Four days later, Shakabpa dispatched Tibet's appeal to the United Nations from Kalimpong. The appeal stressed that the past relationship between Tibet and China 'was essentially born of belief in a common faith and may correctly be described as the relationship between a spiritual guide and his lay followers: It had no political implication'. It went on to state, 'the armed invasion of Tibet for the incorporation of Tibet in communist China through their physical force is a clear case of aggression. As long as the people of Tibet are compelled by force to become a part of China against their will and consent, the present invasion of Tibet will be the grossest instance of the violation of the weak by the strong. We therefore appeal through you to the United Nations of the World to intercede on our behalf and restrain Chinese aggression.70

For decades Tibet was deliberately closed to the outside world and never wanted to be the part of the international organization. It was not that the Tibetan rulers were unaware of the existence of the United Nations: in the 1920s, the 13th Dalai Lama contemplated

joining the League of Nations. But the fear of having to open the country to outsiders had prevented them from seeking membership.71

Therefore when the Tibetan appeal reached the United Nations headquarters in New York on 13 November 1950, the officials in the Secretary General’s office were totally ignorant about Tibet’s status and the situation in the country. They were prepared to dismiss the appeal as a ‘communication from [a] non-governmental organization’, and no further action was taken.

India, the US and the UK were the only countries that were aware that Tibet had submitted an appeal to the UN. When the British delegation made inquiries at the office of the Secretary General about what it intended to do concerning the Tibetan appeal, the British were told that the Secretariat would simply record the appeal on the routine list of communications from non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, they stated that since the telegram was dispatched from Indian Territory, it could not be technically considered as an appeal coming from Tibet.72 However, it was not possible for Tibet to dispatch a direct telegraph from Lhasa, as there was no telegraph link between Tibet and New York.


The Secretarial would not take any action other than to distribute the appeal informally to the delegates of the Direct Security Council.

It appeared as though this was the end of Tibet's appeal.

**Negotiation at the UN:**

On November 1, in an interview with the United Press, the Indian Prime Minister declared:

"I have received a 'suggestion' from Tibetan sources that Tibet would like to appeal to the United Nations against the Chinese Army's invasion. I have replied that India does not feel free to sponsor such a resolution in the United Nations, but Tibet is free to appeal directly, if it so chooses, though Secretary General Trygane Li. India has neither the resources nor the inclination to send armed assistance\(^73\) to Tibet."\(^74\) The same day Nehru cabled this to B.N. Rau\(^75\): "Chinese military operations against Tibet have undoubtedly affected our friendly relations with China. But these developments do not affect our general policy or even our policy regarding admission of new China in United Nations."\(^76\) For the Tibetans, it was a terrible let down, but the Government of India felt

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\(^73\) He cited the case of the Dogra War when the Sikhs of Zorawar Singh were decimated during the winter in Tibet.  
\(^75\) Sir Benegal N. Rau, the Indian Representative to the UN.  
that it could not do more without upsetting the Chinese. Shakabpa's orders to go to Beijing were cancelled and he was directed by the Kashag to remain in Kalimpong to help in preparing and sending the appeal to the UN.

**The Tibetan Appeal**

The appeal by the government of Tibet was cabled to the UN on November 7. The well-drafted appeal stated that the problem was not of Tibet's own making and that “the Tibetans were racially, culturally and geographically far apart from the Chinese”. It compared Tibet's situations with that of Korea.

...As you are aware the problem of Tibet has taken alarming proportions in the recent times. The problem is not of Tibet's own making but is largely the outcome of unthwarted Chinese ambitions to bring weaker nations on her periphery within her active domination. As a people devoted to the tenets of Buddhism, Tibetans had long eschewed the art of warfare, practiced peace and tolerance and for the defence of their country, relied on its geographical configuration and on non involvement in the affairs of other nations. There were times when Tibet sought but seldom received the protection of the Chinese Emperor. The Chinese, however, in their natural urge for expansion, have wholly misconstrued the significance of the ties of friendship and
interdependence that existed between China and Tibet as between neighbours.

China's conduct during the expedition of 1910 completed the rapture between the two countries. In 1911-12, Tibet, under the thirteenth Dalai Lama, declared her complete independence, even as Nepal simultaneously broke its allegiance to China. The Chinese Revolution in 1911, which dethroned the last Manchu Emperor, snapped the last of the sentimental and religious bonds between China and Tibet. Tibet thereafter depended entirely on her isolation, and occasionally on the support of the British in India for her protection.

The Appeal clarifies the position of Tibet vis-à-vis China from the beginning of the century to the date of its filing. And it added: "This unwarranted act of aggression has not only disturbed the peace of Tibet, but is in complete disregard of the solemn assurance given by the Chinese to the government of India, ...the problem is simple. The Chinese claim Tibet as part of China. Tibetans feel that racially, culturally, and geographically, they are far apart from the Chinese".

The Appeal concluded that the Kasha g, with the approval of His Holiness the Dalai Lama entrusted the problem of Tibet in this emergency to the ultimate decision of the United Nations, and hoped that the conscience of the world would not allow the
disruption of their state by methods reminiscent of the jungle.\textsuperscript{77} The appeal was signed by the \textit{Kashag} and the National Assembly on the \textbf{27\textsuperscript{th}} day of the ninth Tibetan month of the Iron-Tiger year\textsuperscript{78} and was dispatched from Shakabpa House in Kalimpong.

Since the text was well written and drafted, it was rumored to have been secretly written by an Indian officer at the Indian Mission in Lhasa for the \textit{Kashag}. It was never proved though it was obvious that someone who spoke excellent English checked the English language.\textsuperscript{79}

The Tibetan Appeal immediately ran into the heavy bureaucracy of the UN. The first objection was that Tibet was not a member of the UN, but worse, the UN wanted to refuse the message because it had originated from outside the country of the appellant.\textsuperscript{80} According to the UN rules, an appeal could not be received unless it originated from the country of the appellant. India, UK or the United States knew very well that for technical reasons, mainly due to the poor transmission network, all official

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{78} November 7, 1950 of the Roman calendar.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Tsering Shakya, op.cit, Cites British Archives to Show that S. Sinha, the Indian Representative in Lhasa helped to put the draft in proper English. Shakabpa did not speak English.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Shakabpa, the Chief Negotiator, cabled the appeal from Kalimpong.
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communiqués from the Tibetan Government had always been issued from Kalimpong in the past.

In the meantime, the Tibetan Government continued to send personal appeals to other western governments such as Canada, and the US, requesting them to support the Tibetan appeal.

On 15 November 1950, it was finally the tiny state of El Salvador which requested the UN Secretary General to list the Tibetan appeal on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Hector Castro, the head of the El Salvador delegation to the UN, asked that the Tibetan issue should come up for discussion in the General Assembly with reference to Article 1 of the UN Charter which states that it was the responsibility of the UN to maintain international peace and stability.

Some have attributed El Salvador's stand to pressure from the CIA; their argument being, why did a small Central American state take a matter to the UN which appeared totally unrelated to the normal preoccupations of that state? Whatever might have been the reasons or motivation that pushed El Salvador to take up the initiative to help the Tibetans, the merit for having done what bigger
and much better informed powers did not do, remained with El Salvador.\textsuperscript{81}

This example merely illustrates how very few states\textsuperscript{82} stood by their professed ideal of defending the rights of small peace-loving oppressed nations. But worse was to follow.

On November 12, Shakabpa stated in an interview in Kalimpong that: ‘I have received intimation from Lhasa about the Tibetan Government’s appeal to the UN.” And when asked, “what will be the Tibetan Government’s case against China? Does Tibet seek independence?” He prudently answered that “Tibet is a peaceful and religious state. China attacked us from four or five directions while negotiations were going on regarding relations between Tibet and China. Our appeal to the UN is that the Chinese forces be made to withdraw to the Sino-Tibetan boundary demarcated by the river Dirchu.\textsuperscript{83} The second question does not arise at present since we have to settle the first question of withdrawal of the Chinese forces from Tibetan territory\textsuperscript{84} The Tibetans often show reluctance to state their of objectives in a direct manner.

\textsuperscript{81} One of the informants, who had the opportunity to meet the leader of the Salvadorian delegation many years later, was assured that it was purely a Salvadorian initiative.

\textsuperscript{82} Including India, UK and US.

\textsuperscript{83} The Yangtse in Tibetan.

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{the Hindu}, Madras, 13 November, 1950
On November 14 the Indian Government announced in New Delhi that the problem of "Tibet and Nepal, besides domestic problems will be raised in the two-day debate in Parliament beginning (tomorrow) on the Presidential address"

And on the same day the Hindu wrote: According to informed quarters here, India is expected to extend her general support to Tibet's case before the Security Council.

India's support, it is understood, will mainly be based on the ground that the issue could be solved peacefully and without resort to arms and the extent to which there were military operations, world peace was endangered. The UK and the US, according to the diplomatic quarters here, are also expected to support the Tibetan appeal.\(^8^5\) The Indian reasons for not raising the Tibetan issue were based primarily on the false belief that a peaceful solution could be reached and that the status quo could be maintained. The British had always managed to keep the status of Tibet quite nebulous. It has always been advantageous for them to keep the legal position on Tibet as vague as possible.

In 1914, the Government of British India had accepted a nominal suzerainty of the Chinese over Tibet with the explicit condition that Tibet would be fully autonomous.

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\(^8^5\) The Hindu, Madras, 14 November 1950.
The main objectives of the Shimla Convention had been to show that Tibetans were able to manage their own affairs. The British had only kept the Chinese 'suzerainty' aspect as part of the definition of the status of Tibet in order to have leverage with the Tibetans, in case they were tempted to lean towards the Russians.

The highly intricate thinking of the players of the 'Great Game' was sometimes so complicated that ordinary human beings could not follow the sequence of logic. It was certainly the case with the self-trained Tibetan diplomats who were totally ignorant of the vagaries of world diplomacy.86

Vagueness had worked well for years, but times were changing with UN becoming an important world body, new rules were framed and the old colonial definitions had to be fixed in black and white: either a state was independent or it was not. No state could claim to be at the same time under the suzerainty or vassalage of another state and yet to be fully autonomous.

The problem for the British Government was that a proper legal definition of the status of Tibet had now become necessary. The place and status of the 'land of Snows' on the Asian Chessboard and its appeal to the General Assembly depended on this issue because, according to the UN, only a 'state' could make an appeal to the General Assembly.

86 Claude Arpi, op.cit .p.336.
Surprisingly, after consulting legal experts, His Majesty's Government accepted the fact that Tibet was a separate state. One of the points of Whitehall was that the British Government had concluded a Convention between China, Tibet and herself in 1914 in Shimla. The other point was that the Chinese had been expelled from Tibet in 1911 and Tibet had declared her independence two years later. The fact that Tibet had kept control of her internal as well as external affairs from 1911 to 1950 certainly qualified it as a separate state under Article 35(2) of the UN Charter.

However, the Foreign office wanted to study further the meaning of 'suzerainty'. It was a complicated matter, as it had always been kept vague in the past. The legal cell of the Foreign office concluded that two factors had to be taken into consideration:

1. Whether the treaties concluded by a sovereign state were *ipso facto* concluded for the vassal; and

2. Whether war of a suzerain was *ipso facto* war of the vassal.

On both counts, it was obvious to the British Foreign office that Tibet was an independent state. The instructions to the British Representatives at the UN were: "we are committed in a general way to India's support and this will doubtless extend to the line she adopts in Lake Success." Though we fully acknowledge preponderance of India's interests in this matter and recognize that

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87 Headquarter of the UN at New York.
initiative must lie with her, we consider it of utmost importance to have a preliminary exchange of views with her". 88

This British Representative in the UN was requested not to mention the legal position taken by the British Government. The Representative's brief was that though they had to be prepared to accept Tibet as a separate state in case the matter came to the General Assembly, the British strongly favoured a wild action: "The council contents itself with a condemnation of the Chinese action and not call on China to withdraw her forces from Tibet". However, for London the question remained as to what India's position would be?

Till mid November 1950 the Position of the GOI was clear: India would not sponsor the appeal but would support it if raised by any other nation. Then India's position began to vacillate. Around the same year Nehru said that...

When Chinese troops marched into Tibet proper, we told Tibetan Government that if they so chose, they could prefer appeal to UN. We could not, however, sponsor such an appeal, though we might support it generally. We cannot go back on our assurance and have, therefore, to support inclusion of proposal for consideration by UN.

We cannot, consistently with previous declarations, support Tibetan claim to independence, though we can and should favour

88 Quoted in Melvyn Goldstein, op.cit. p. 717. Telegram from London to UK High Commissioner in Delhi dated 10 November 1950.
recognition of Tibetan autonomy. We should support appeal on broad ground that problems of Sino-Tibetan relations should be solved peacefully and not by resort to arms. 89

Nehru added a small sentence that speaks for itself: “Chinese Government has repeatedly expressed themselves in favour of Tibetan autonomy, but of course we do not know what their idea of autonomy is”. 90 But the Prime Minister had begun to have doubts, for in the telegram to B.N. Rau 91, he had replied that: “we doubt whether a discussion of Tibetan problems in General Assembly or in Security Council will yield any useful result”

In an internal note on November 18, Nehru had written down his position: he said that: “I think that in no event should we sponsor Tibet’s appeal. I would personally think that it would be a good thing if that appeal were not heard in the Security Council or the General Assembly. If it is considered there, there is bound to be


90 There is also misunderstanding regarding the Chinese and Indian interpretation of the world autonomy. The Indian and the British understanding of the world is based on what is commonly known as the Eden memorandum, which recognized Tibet’s right to ‘internal’ and ‘external’ autonomy when the Chinese informed the Indians that china would respect Tibet’s autonomy, it meant something entirely different. The Chinese use the world in its narrowest sense, and in rejected Tibet’s right to maintain external relations.

91 Rau stated that no Member of the Security Council appeared to be included to sponsor the Tibetan appeal mainly on grounds of the ‘doubtful’ status of Tibet and a general lack of knowledge about the problem and asked for instructions in case the matter was brought up.

92 Emphasis by the author.
a great deal of bitter speaking and accusation, which will worsen the situation as regards Tibet, as well as the possibility of widespread war, without helping it in the least. It must be remembered that neither the UK nor the USA, nor indeed any other power is particularly interested in Tibet or the future of that country. What they are interested in, is embarrassing China. Our interest, on the other hand is Tibet, and if we cannot serve that interest, we fail.\textsuperscript{93} At that the time Communist Nations were lobbying for inclusion of Beijing as a member of the UN and the Security Council.\textsuperscript{94}

According to Acheson's information, the change of stance of India's delegation was due to the receipt of the note from the Chinese Government dated November 16: "Presumably change of position from that taken on November 19 result of delay in receipt of November 16 note or reconsideration of Policy".\textsuperscript{95}

However, opinion was divided in India, as Henderson explained: "Bajpai told me Rau had telegraphed GOI that apparently no member SC desired take initiative re Tibet and therefore suggested matter be dropped in UN. GOI however could not agree to "letting Tibet down". There had been some sentiment among various

\textsuperscript{93} SWJN, Series II, Col. 15 (2) p. 345. Policy regarding Tibet. Note dated 18 November 1950.

\textsuperscript{94} K M Pannikkar, the Indian Ambassador in China, and some other Indian official were pushing harder than anyone else.

\textsuperscript{95} USFR, Telegram, 793B.00/11-2550 dated November 28, 1950. The secretary of state to the embassy of India
members Indian cabinet opposing GOI taking any action in the UN. However, overwhelming majority sentiment was regardless effect on India-China relations GOI could not afford take uninterested position re Tibet".  

At Lake Success⁹⁷, a procedural battle was going on: the Secretariat of the UN informed the El Salvador that the Tibetan problem should first be brought to the General Committee which had to decide if the issue could or could not be referred to the General Assembly. Castro, the Salvadorian representative, proposed that the following resolution should be passed by the General Assembly:

Taking note that the peaceful nation of Tibet has been invaded, without provocation on its part, by foreign forces proceeding from the territory controlled by the government established at Peking.

[The General Assembly] decides

1. To condemn this act of unprovoked aggression against Tibet;

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⁹⁶ USFR, Telegram, 793B.00/11-2050 dated November, 20. 1950. The Ambassador in India to the Secretary of state.

⁹⁷ Lake Success is the head quarters of the UN In New York
2. To establish a committee composed of (names of nations)..., which will be entrusted with the study of the appropriate measures that could be taken by the General Assembly on this matter;

3. To instruct the committee to undertake that study with special reference to the appeal made to the United Nations by the Government of Tibet, and to render its report to the General Assembly, as early as possible, during the present session. 98

In course of the negotiations in New York, most of the representatives indicated that India was the nation most concerned, and that they would follow India's lead. 99 However, India was clearly not ready to take all the responsibility, so the British suggested a draft beginning thus: "The situation in Tibet is one, which is primarily concerns the Government of India although His Majesty's Government is interested".

The logical outcome of the Foreign Office legal cell's opinion was that Tibet was a separate state and consequently an act of aggression had been committed. As a result pressures would have to be exerted by the community of nations to take an action in favour of Tibet. But, nobody wanted to act! Especially the for reasons of the lack of support from India and Britain was complex


99 The same thing will happen in 1959, 1961, and 1965 when the Tibetan issue will again be brought up in the UN.
Indian reasons for not raising the Tibetan issue, based primarily on the false belief that a peaceful solution could be reached, and that the status quo could be maintained. In the end, there were no major powers prepared to support Tibet's appeal to the UN. India was caught up in the delusion of playing a historic role as mediator between east and West over the Korean issue, and failed to see the wood for the trees. The Chinese made it clear that the Indian view on international issues of the day did not count for much. The British felt that their obligations towards India were paramount, even to the extent of alienating the Americans. Initially both Britain and India chose to mislead the UN by providing inaccurate information about Tibet's legal status and the prospects of any peaceful settlement between Tibet and China. As the Korean issue took over the United Nations' agenda, Tibet's appeal faded into obscurity. This dispelled the hopes that the Tibetans had placed in international support: there was no alternative but to seek negotiations with China.

**Sino-Tibetan Agreement: Incorporation on China's term**

In February 1951, the Tibetan government sent a fifteen-men delegation to Beijing, via Chamdo, led by Kalon Ngapo Ngamang Jigme, who had been released and appointed Vice-Chairman of the so called Chamdo Liberation Committee by the Chinese. After a short period of imprisonment and indoctrination upon its arrival in the Chinese capital, the delegation was joined by the first mission
led by Dzasa Khemey Sonam Wangdi and Khenchung Thupten Tendar. The mission had traveled via India and Hongkong. The negotiations with the Chinese plenipotentiaries, Li Meihan, Zhang Jingwer, Zhang Guohua, and Sun Zhiyuan started on 29 April?

It was with great reluctance that the Dalai Lama had sent negotiators to Beijing. The Indian government, though initially in favour of the negotiations, had warned that with the military conquest of Tibet underway, the negotiators would be under considerable duress. On the other hand, there was little else Tibet could do. It had suffered a decisive defeat in Kham and a diplomatic set back at the United Nations, and there was little prospect of obtaining effective outside aid at this stage. To pursue negotiations as best it could seem to be the only available course of action.\(^\text{100}\)

The Dalai Lama did not, however, give the delegates full powers, for he feared that they might yield to Chinese pressures in Beijing. Instead, the delegates were instructed to refer all the important matters to Lhasa and the temporary government headquarters in Dromo for decision.\(^\text{101}\)

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The Chinese negotiators, Li Weihan and Zhang Jingwu, made it plain that the proposed draft failed to acknowledge the independence of Tibet, and conceded control over Tibet's defense and foreign affairs to China and in effect represented an ultimatum. The Tibetans were addressed in harsh and insulting terms, threatened with personal violence, and virtually kept prisoners. They were simply given the choice of signing or accepting responsibility for the immediate and unconditional military advance on Lhasa.  

As the Dalai Lama had feared, the delegates succumbed to Chinese pressure and signed under duress what came to be known as the "Seventeen Point Agreement".

After the military invasion of Tibet has started and the small Tibetan army was defeated, the PRC imposed a treaty on the Tibetan government under the terms of which Tibet was declared to be a part of China, albeit enjoying a large degree of autonomy. In the white paper, China claimed that the Tibetan Government signed this treaty voluntarily, and that the Dalai Lama, his government and the Tibetan people as a whole welcomed it. The fact shows a

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102 These instructions were reported to Ambassador Henderson in New Delhi by Heinrich Harrer, a few days after he had left Dromo, where he had a last meeting with the Dalai lama (4 Henderson to Matthew's, 29 march 1951, FRUS 7 [1951, P. 1611). This was confirmed on 13 May, by Dzasa Liushar, the Tibetan Foreign Secretary (steere to see of state, 29 May 1951, FRUS 7 [1951], p. 1690) Shakabpa too confirmed the Dalai Lama's instruction (Henderson to the Secretary of state, 11 June 1951, FRUS 7 [1951], PP. 1707-1708).
very different story, leading to the conclusion that the so-called "17-point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" was never validly concluded and was rejected by the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama tells us about the Tibetan Prime Minister Lukhangwa having told the Chinese General Zhang Jin Wu in 1952:

"It was absurd to refer to the terms of the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement'. Our people did not accept the agreement and the Chinese themselves had repeatedly broken the terms of it. Their army was still in occupation of eastern Tibet: the area had not been returned to the government of Tibet, as it should have been". 103

Under immense Chinese pressure the Tibetan delegation signed the “Agreement of the Central people’s government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” on 23 May 1951, without being able to inform the Tibetan Government. None of this posed an obstacle to the Chinese Government to proceed with a signing ceremony and to announce to the world that an "agreement" had been concluded for the "peaceful liberation of Tibet". Even the seals affixed to the document were forged by the Chinese Government to give it the necessary semblance of authenticity.

The seventeen clauses of the "Agreement", among other things, authorized the entry into Tibet of Chinese forces and

empowered the Chinese Government to handle Tibet’s external affairs. On the other hand, it guaranteed that China would not alter the existing political systems in Tibet and not interfere with the established status, function, and powers of the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama. The Tibetan people were to have regional autonomy, and their religious beliefs and customs were to be respected. Internal reforms in Tibet would be effected after consultation with leading Tibetans and without compulsion. Radio Beijing broadcast the full text of what came to be known as the "Seventeen-Point Agreement" on 27 May 1951. This was the first time the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government heard of the devastating document. The reaction in Droma (where he was staying at that time) and Lhasa was one of shock and disbelief.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government withheld the public repudiation of the "Agreement". He returned to Lhasa on 17 August 1951 in the hope of re-negotiating a more favourable treaty with the Chinese.

On 9 September 1951, around 3,000 Chinese troops marched into Lhasa, soon followed by some 20,000 more, from eastern Tibet and from Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) in the north. The PLA occupied the principal cities of Ruthok and Garthok, and then Gyantse and Shigatse. With the occupation of all the major cities of Tibet, including Lhasa, and large concentration of troops throughout eastern and western Tibet, the military control of Tibet
was virtually complete. From this position, China refused to re-open negotiations and the Dalai Lama had effectively lost the ability to either accept or reject any Tibet-China agreement. First opportunity he found of expressing himself freely again came only on 20 June 1959 after his flight to India.

In assessing the “Seventeen-point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet”, two factors are crucial. First, the extent to which China was violating international law when the PLA marched into Tibet, and second, the effect of the signing of the “Agreement”.

"The law governing treaties is based on the universally recognized principle that the foundation of conventional obligations is the free and mutual consent of contracting parties and, conversely, that freedom of consent is essential to the validity of an agreement."¹⁰⁴ Treaties brought about by the threat or the use of force, lack legal validity particularly if the coercion is applied to the country and government in question rather than only to the negotiators themselves. With China occupying large portions of Tibet and openly threatening a full military advance to Lhasa unless the treaty was signed, the “Agreement” was invalid ab initio, which meant that it could not even be validated by a later act of acquiescence by the Tibetan Government when on 23 May, the

Chinese and Tibetan delegations signed the final copy of the "Agreement". The preamble to the "Agreement" stated that Tibet had been part of China for the past 'hundred years or more' and the imperialist forces had caused disunity between the Tibetan and Han nationalities. It further stated that 'the Local Government of Tibet did not oppose imperialist deception and provocation, but adopted an unpatriotic attitude towards the great motherland. The first article stated that 'the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the motherland, the people's Republic of China'. Next day, there was an hour-long meeting with Mao and a banquet was held for the delegation. He opened his speech by saying that he wanted to 'welcome Tibet back into the mother land'. He went on to say that for the past century the relationship between Tibet and China had been lost because of the oppressive policies of the Manchu and Chiang Kai-Shek's reactionary regime, and that moreover the imperialists had conspired to split the motherland. Now that the imperialists had been destroyed, 'the relationship between Tibet and China would be like brothers. The oppression of one nationality by another would be eliminated. All nationalities would work for the benefit of the motherland.'

As far as the Chinese were concerned, the "Agreement" came into effect immediately after it was signed. The extensive

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105 IHa'urta-ra (Lhautara) Cited in Tsering Shakya, op.cit, p.69.
106 SWB, NO 111, 5 June 1951, p. 9
international publicity surrounding the signing of the "Agreement" gave China a major propaganda and diplomatic victory. The international community accepted it as a *fait accompli*. For the Chinese it was a political necessity that they should assure the world the peaceful resolution of the Tibetan problem.

The Tibetan delegation dispatched a telegram to Dromo, informing the *Kashag* and the Dalai Lama that an agreement and a secret clause had been signed.¹⁰⁷ The Dalai Lama described his initial reaction in an announcement:

"We first came to know of it from a broadcast, which Ngabo made on Peking Radio. It was a terrible shock when we heard the terms of it. We were appalled at the mixture of communist cliches, vainglorious assertions that were completely false, and bold statements, which were only partly true, and the terms were far worse and more oppressive than anything we had imagined."¹⁰⁸

It was clear that the Chinese had not deviated from the initial document the PLA had released immediately after their victory in Chamdo in October 1950. There was a striking similarity between the content of this document and the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement', supposedly reached after mutual consultation.

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¹⁰⁷ Iha'urta-ra, ibid.p.108.

¹⁰⁸ The Dalai Lama,op.cit, p. 88
US Interventions in the Tibetan issue

The Tibetans once again turned to the United States for help. The Americans had shown their willingness to provide both diplomatic and military aid. Nevertheless they were hampered by India's fear that US involvement would bring the cold war to the foothills of the Himalayas, and this prevented the US from taking any positive action. The Americans were clearly frustrated by India's and Britain's refusal either to co-operate with them or to allow the USA to do what they themselves were unwilling to contemplate. The Americans were concerned that the Chinese would gain in Tibet without any protest from outside. In March 1957, the Americans approached the Indians and asked what their reaction would be if the Sino-Tibetan negotiation failed. The US officials were amazed to discover that the Indians had not given much thought to it, and merely suggested that it could be left to the UN. The Tibetans had already given up hope that India would provide any political or diplomatic aid. The Tibetan delegation had not even contacted the Indian Ambassador while in Beijing.

Roy Henderson wrote to Mathews, the Director of South Asian Affairs in the State Department, suggesting that a secret personal message to the Dalai Lama should be sent, though on plain paper and without any formal authorization from the American Government.

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109 This, of course, depended on India's approval.
The letter contains the following points:

I. The Peking communist regime is determined to obtain complete control over Tibet. No concession made to that regime by His Holiness can change this determination. The Chinese Communists prefer to gain control through trickery rather than through force. They were therefore anxious to persuade His Holiness to make an agreement that would allow them to establish a representative in Lhasa.

II. The establishment of a representative of the Peking communist regime in Lhasa would serve only to speed up the seizing of all of Tibet by the Chinese Communists.

III. Until changes in the world situation would make it difficult for the Chinese Communist to take over Tibet, His Holiness should in no circumstances return to Lhasa or send his treasures or those of Tibet back to Lhasa. Any treasure which might be returned to Lhasa would eventually be taken away by the Chinese Communists.

IV. His Holiness should not return to Lhasa while the danger exists. He should leave Yatung for some foreign country if it should look like the Chinese Communists are trying to prevent his escape.

V. It was suggested that His Holiness should send representatives at once to Ceylon. These representatives should try to arrange with the Government of Ceylon for the immediate
transfer of his treasures to Ceylon. They should also try to obtain permission for him and his household to find asylum in Ceylon in case he leaves Tibet. After the Ceylon Government has granted permission for asylum, he should ask the Indian Government for assurance that if he and his household should leave Tibet they could pass through India to Ceylon.

VI. If the Dalai Lama and his household could not find safe asylum in Ceylon he could be certain of finding a place of refuge in one of the friendly countries, including the United States in the Western Hemisphere.

VII. It might also be useful for him to immediately send a mission to the United States where it would be prepared to make a direct appeal to the United Nations. It is understood that His Holiness is already aware that favourable considerations will be granted to the applications made by members of a Tibetan mission to the United Nations for United States visas. Henderson's letter was given to Liushar, who took it to Dromo. On 21 May, the Dalai Lama acknowledged receipt of the letter and stated that at present negotiations were proceeding in Beijing and, if Tibet needed to, he would approach the USA, in which case he hoped the USA would do its best to help.

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On 26 May, a more significant meeting took place between Wilkins and Shakabpa in Calcutta. Shakabpa told the US consulate that he had been sent by the Dalai Lama to reopen discussions with the United States and to ascertain precisely what kind of help Tibet could expect from the United States. Shakabpa added that the Foreign Secretary Liushar was on his way to Yantung to discuss the letter Ambassador Henderson had sent to the Dalai Lama. Shakabpa then listed six specific questions he said he and the Foreign Secretary needed to be answered out of which three are listed below:

I. Should Tibet report to the UN if current talks were to break, and how should they do it? Was the UN still interested in Tibet and could it be of any help? What would the US do? Would it be willing to grant visa?

II. As Tibet had no official relations with Ceylon, would the US be willing to approach the Government of Ceylon to give asylum for the Dalai Lama and his followers?

III. Would the US be willing grant asylum to the Dalai Lama and to approximately hundred of his followers? How would he be received? As a Head of State would the US be willing to provide for his expenses? 

Shakabpa was told that Ambassador Henderson would be consulted immediately and that the answers would be sent to him in Kalimpong. Tibetan attention immediately focused on the merits, and validity of the 'Seventeen-point Agreement', with its repeated references to Tibet's returning to the great motherland of China. The next two months would be spent in heated debate and delicate secret negotiations aimed at deciding whether the Dalai Lama should accept the agreement and return to Lhasa, or denounce it, go into exile, and launch a political and military struggle against the communists.

On 1 June, Shakabpa told the US Consulate General in Calcutta that the Tibetan government was anxiously awaiting the US reply to the Dalai Lama's six questions and explained how a US representative could meet Shakabpa secretly after dark in Kalimpong. The American saw this as a good sign, since it indicated that the Tibetan government was still considering opposing the Chinese.  

This new US position did not offer much concrete support, but it did hold out the possibility of the Dalai Lama and his leading officials receiving asylum in the United States.  

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112 USFR, 793 b.00/6-151, P. 1609

113 Shakabpa and the Tibetans were strongly opposed to seeking asylum in Thailand, another country suggested by the US. On the grounds that Thailand not only had Chinese troops in the north end was two close to China, but was also too unstable.
in Delhi sent Wilkins to Kalimpong to report these answers to Shakabpa and to ascertain the status of the 'Seventeen-point Agreement'. Shakabpa then told Wilkins about a telegram from the Dalai Lama in which he had said that neither the Tibetan Government nor he himself recognized the Sino-Tibetan agreement, and that the Tibetan delegation had been forced, by pressure and threats, to sign it. Shakabpa again met Wilkins for a second time and inquired on behalf of the Dalai Lama. The message from Wilkins said:

"If US willing to help, you (Shakabpa) should make arrangements for any departure from Yatung, for India immediately; if US unwilling to help, you should return to Yatung at once" and he said that he would inform the Dalai Lama at once of the US offer and that he thought that it could affect the outcome of the debate at Yatung.\(^{114}\) By mid June, therefore, the Americans had no reply from the Dalai Lama regarding their proposals and the 'Seventeen-point Agreement'.

With the Chinese delegation due to arrive in India soon, the Americans decided to sweeten their offer to the Dalai Lama by indicating more clearly than before that they would render public support if the Tibetans denounced the agreement. This was conveyed by the State Department to the Acting Ambassador in India on 16 June:

\(^{114}\) The message is reported in Ibid.
You may inform Tibetans, if and when your consider desirable, that upon disavowal Sino-Tibetan agreement US official reference to this actions indicating sympathy for Tibetan Positions, old be expected. Tenor and timing of any comment would depend on character Tibetan announcement. It is considered undesirable that US government publicly introduces UN question in advance Tibetans own action in this regard.\textsuperscript{115}

The United States also informed the British that America was not ready to “appease” India and was content to suffer a deterioration in relations with that country, if need be. This action, it felt, was justified by the need to counter communist aggression.\textsuperscript{116}

In the meantime, the Dalai Lama’s continued failure to reply led the Americans to speculate that he might not be free to make decisions, a speculation which was strengthened when Taktse· Rimpoche told the US Consulate General in Calcutta that the Dalai Lama: (a) Certainly did not approve of the Sino-Tibetan agreement; (b) would very well make a statement disavowing the agreement before the Chinese arrived in India; (c) would definitely leave Tibet before the Chinese and Tibetan delegates arrived there; and (d)

\textsuperscript{115} USFR, 793B00/6-1551, telegram from the US State Department to the US embassy in India, dated 16 June 1951.

\textsuperscript{116} FO 371/92997, telegram from the United kingdom Embassy in Washington, D.C., to the British Foreign office, dated 25 June, 1951.
preferred to seek asylum in the United States. The American position met with little enthusiasm in India and Britain. On 11 June 1951, G.S. Bajpai informally expressed the Indian position, reiterating India's earlier decision to avoid any military or diplomatic confrontation that could prove prejudicial to India's relations with China. He also indicated that if the Dalai Lama decided to leave Tibet and asked for asylum in India, his request would be granted. However, this would not be a "political asylum" of a sort in which the Dalai Lama could function as the head of a government-in-exile, but would, rather, be a "humanitarian" gesture to an individual who would not be allowed to engage in any political activity in India. The British High Commissioner also reported that the Indian government was strongly opposed to the US involvement. The British Foreign office, too, continued its policy of yielding all initiative to India to discourage the United States from supporting Tibet. For example, on 18 June, in response to the US willingness to issue a statement of support for the Tibetan disavowal of the Sino-Tibetan agreement, the British told the State department that they hoped Tibet would not appeal to the United Nations, and that the United States would consult the Indian

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117 USFR, 793B006/1651, telegram NO. 541 from the US Consul in Calcutta to the U.S. Secretary of State, dated 26 June 1951.

118 FO371/92996, Telegram from the United Kingdom High Commissioner in India to the Commonwealth Relation office, dated 11 June 1951.

119 FO371/92997, Telegram from the United Kingdom High Commissioner in India to the Commonwealth Relation office, dated 18 June 1951.
Government about its plans and attitudes. The British told the State Department that continued failure to consult India would further strain relations and might even “result in Nehru washing his hands entirely off (the) Tibetan problem”. 120 R.H. Scolt, head of the British South East Asia Department of the Foreign office, informed the Americans on 19 June that he thought the American suggestions were cynical from the Tibetan point of view and dangerous from the point view of American-Indian relations. Scolt argued that “the result of encouraging the Tibetan to denounce the Sino-Tibetan agreement would be to provide American publicists with some propaganda points, but not aid the Tibetans effectively”. He thought that the US Embassy should consult the Indian government and weigh their views carefully before embarking on this propaganda stunt.” 121 The significance of the United States’ willingness to support the Tibetan cause, regardless of British and Indian attitude was not missed by Scolt. He wrote very perceptively:

This is an important landmark in Tibetan history if, under American encouragement, the Dalai Lama repudiates the Peking agreement, a heavy responsibility will fall on the United States authorities and we should at least try to secure that the Dalai Lama goes to the “friends of Tibet in the US”, also would now see that the

120 Ibid.

121 FO371/92997, Comment by R.H. Scolt on Minute by J.A. Murray, dated 21 June 1951.
movement of the Dalai Lama and an entourage of 100 to Ceylon, as well as the Dalai Lama's other needs in Ceylon, would be paid.

On 21 July, the Dalai Lama left Yatung for Lhasa, although his mother and her family remained in Kalimpong. Two days later after receiving the Indian political officer in Sikkim, Chang also left for Lhasa. Anti-Indian feelings were running very high at this time, and the Dalai Lama himself commented that Tibetan officials were insulted and that Dayal, although residing only two days away in Gangtok (Sikkim), made no attempt to pay even a courtesy call, despite the fact that he had been warmly welcomed in Lhasa only a little more than a year before.

The only outside country that had offered Tibet any support was the United States, but it did not offer a real hope of preventing the Chinese takeover, or of Tibet regaining control in the near future. As the Tibetans saw it, the Untied States had sent thousand of troops to Korea, yet it was unwilling to make a similar commitment to Tibetan “freedom” and instead repeatedly insisted that all military aid (meaning guns, troops) had to come through India. The Tibetans, as we have seen, considered this a meaningless gesture since the Indian answer was a foregone conclusion. The United States offered to help the Dalai Lama kept alive the flame of Tibetan autonomy and freedom, but little else.
The US expectations of the Dalai Lama taking a strong stand against the Chinese Communists received a set back on 1 July, when Shakabpa informed them that the Dalai Lama would hold further discussions with the Chinese Communist delegation in Yatung before he issued a statement on the 'Agreement', or went to India.

In early July, the United States tried again to contact the Dalai Lama directly. A secret and very strongly supportive letter was sent that provided the Dalai Lama with a “concise and clear statement of the attitude of the United States”. For security reasons, this letter was unsigned, undated, and contained no mention of the United States. It was believed to have reached the Dalai Lama by 6 July; and the letter reassures the US willingness as the point of support to Tibet.

In the meantime in Washington, the United States raised its offer. The State Department officials met with Taktse Rimpoche and orally presented a new offer that was cited in a telegram from Acheson to the US Embassy in Delhi. It stated that the United States was willing to support: (1) Tibetan “self-determination”; (2) the Dalai Lama as the Head of an autonomous Tibet; and (3) the Dalai Lama’s ultimate return to Tibet to head a non-communist state, through the United States.
Conclusion

(1) The People's Liberation Army began its 'liberation' on 7 October 1950, crossed into Tibet two and a half weeks later. The Chinese Government announced publicly that "people's army units have been ordered to advance into Tibet to free three million Tibetans from the imperial oppression and to consolidate national defenses on the western borders of China"\(^{122}\)

(2) Early in October, about 40,000 troops under the command of General Zhang Guohna crossed into Tibet at eight points on the border and attacked the provincial capital of Chamdo. Tibetan troops numbering only 8,000 and much inferior in training to the Chinese were defeated. The Communist forces took Chamdo on 19 October, and captured the governor of Kham, Kalon Nagapo Ngamang Jigme. In the first two weeks of fighting, a total of 4,000 Tibetan Army officers and men were killed and the remainder of the Tibetan Army was forced to surrender.\(^{123}\)

(3) The 'liberation' of Tibet was completed with the arrival of several thousand troops of the People's Liberation Army in Lhasa, although the old system continued to exist in some form for another eight years. October 1951 marks the end of the de facto

\(^{122}\) Chanakya Sen, op.cit., p.65

independent. Lamaist state. Tibet had struggled for almost four decades to attain an internationally recognized status as fully autonomous or independent, but in the end it felt compelled to accept Chinese sovereignty, with the hope of preserving the essence of its social, political and religious system.

A blend of forceful diplomacy and display of strategic tactics, a better knowledge of the enemy were chiefly responsible for the advance of the PLA in Tibet.¹²⁴

The famous historian, Dr R.C. Majumdar sheds light on the traditional Chinese way of thinking and acting:

There is, however, one aspect of Chinese culture that is little known outside the circle of professional historians. It is the aggressive imperialism that characterized the politics of China throughout the course of her history, at least during the part which is well known to us. Thanks to the systematic recording of historical facts by Chinese themselves, an almost unique achievement in oriental counties... we are in position to follow the imperial and aggressive policy of China from the third century BC to the present day, a period of more than twenty-two hundred years... It is characteristic of China that if a region once acknowledged her

¹²⁴ Deng and Liu would be congratulated by Mao a few months later when they came to Beijing to celebrate the first anniversary of the Communist Republic (Oct 1, 1951). Indeed the 'liberation' had been unexpectedly smooth and without a problem. W. D.Shakabpa, Tibet: A political History, (New Heaven, 1967). p.301.
nominal suzerainty even for a short period, she should regard it as a part of her empire for ever and would automatically receive her claim over it even after a thousand years whenever there was a chance of enforcing it.” 125

The history of Mao’s China is a tale of well-planned and well-executed moves. All the events from 1949 onwards unfolded in a perfectly calculated sequence. The invasion of Tibet in 1950 after a very vague protest by the Indian government; and the adjournment of the Tibetan Appeal to the UN (at India’s instance), the 1951 Sino-Tibetan ‘Agreement’ (forced on the Tibetan under duress); and the erasing of the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Mao was a great strategist and never forgot that his final goal, the ‘liberation’ of Tibet, was the first step to ‘liberate’ other peoples of South Asia.

In October 1951, after the ‘liberation’ of Tibet, the Chinese intervention in Korea and the successes of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Zhou Enlai presented a report on foreign affairs. He said, under the influence of the success of the Chinese Revolution, the consciousness of the Asiatic people has grown to an unprecedented level, the liberation movements are growing day after day. The unity of all the people of Asia will create a powerful force without rival in extreme-orient, and it will push forward the great wheel of history in the sense of the movement for the independence and liberation of

the people of Asia. No doubt the term 'liberation' was meant in the sense that the Tibetans had began to experience bitterly.

In the wake of the defeat and the “Peaceful liberation” (i.e. invasion) of Tibet, the US and British governments expressed their support for the Indian position, and the former informed New Delhi of its desire to help Tibet by whatever means possible. The Americans recognized that, in view of geographic and historic factors, the main burden of the problem rested on India and that its cooperation was needed in any attempt to help Tibet effectively. Prime Minister Nehru even requested that Washington refrain from publicly condemning China for its actions in Tibet, for the fear that such condemnation might give credence to China’s claims that western powers had an interest in Tibet and that they exerted influence over India’s policy. The main consideration, however, was Nehru’s belief that friendly relations between the two biggest Asian countries, was essential to their welfare and to the security of Asia as a whole.

In marked contrast to India’s cautious attitude, the Chinese made little effort to appear conciliatory, and argued that they were only exercising their sovereign rights in Tibet by performing the “sacred duty” to “liberate” the Tibetans people and to drive out foreign forces and to ensure that the Tibetan people were free from
aggression and were able to realize regional autonomy and religious freedom". 126

The members of the Tibetan National Assembly, far from being reassured by the proclamation, resolved to take the exceptional measure. They requested the Dalai Lama, still a minor at the age of fifteen, to accept full ruling powers over Tibet. On 17 November, he accepted the heavy burden and became the supreme ruler of Tibet. In the meantime, the Tibetan government sent the first two appeals to the United Nations. In the letter addressed to the Secretary General, it explained that Tibet is in no position to resist the Chinese advance. And expressed his helplessness to resist the brutal effort of the Chinese to pull into war a nation dedicated to peace, and thereby sought United Nation's assistance to stop agreement whenever it takes place. The letter also appealed to the United Nations to intervene, and entrusted the problem of Tibet to the United Nations' ultimate decision.

El Salvador was the first nation asking the General Assembly to consider the Appeal, and the United States and India decided to lend their support to the Salvadoran initiative. The Salvadoran delegate, Hector David Castro, stated that "unprovoked aggression had been committed against Tibet, a country that, although at one time a protectorate of China, had enjoyed complete independence at least since 1912." He considered that the Assembly would be

126 The Seventeen-point Agreement (see Appendix XI)
neglecting its responsibilities if it failed to condemn this international act of aggression, and called for the adoption of a resolution to that effect.

The General Assembly at that time was much preoccupied with the Korean question. By that time the Indian representative to the UN, Sir Benegal N Rau, persuaded his Government not to support a discussion of Tibet in the General Assembly, as Indian criticism of Communist China would adversely affect India's mediation efforts in the Korean conflict, and also might jeopardize what little hope remained that the Sino-Tibetan problem could be resolved by negotiation. Despite this setback, the US Government was still anxious to support Tibetan resistance to communist domination but found it increasingly difficult to secure any degree of cooperation from Nehru's government. While the United States was searching for an effective, though limited, course of action, events in Tibet and China had already reached the critical state.

The diplomatic communications between Governments of India and the China hint that India's unwillingness to take a strong stand on the issue was camouflaged with the high sounding idea of "peaceful negotiations". India, being a successor of British Indian government and an immediate neighbour of Tibet, was the country to which Tibet was of utmost concern. So, the Indian non-committal approach provided a lead to the other governments in formulating their policies with respect to Tibet.
During the nine years that followed the Chinese People's Liberation Army entering Tibet with the declared purpose of 'liberation', and the unsuccessful Tibetan appeals to the UN, Tibet witnessed the Khampa uprising of 1956 and the revolt of 1959. The general discontent of Tibetan was accentuated after the consistent violation of the “Seventeen-point Agreement” which was signed 13 May 1951. In fact, the report submitted to the International Commission of Jurists by its legal inquiry committee on Tibet, investigated the violation of the maintaining the existing political system of Tibet, to maintain the status of Dalai Lama, to refrain from compulsions in the matter of reforms in Tibet and to protect freedom of religion. Their finding established violation of 1948. UN convention on genocide as well as the universal Declaration of Human rights.