CHAPTER - 2

EARLY AMERICAN INTEREST IN TIBET ISSUE

United States was largely not interested in Tibetan affairs until the Second World War.¹ However, World War-II, the post-war departure of British from India and the 1949 communist victory in China radically changed the Asian environment. These events among others forced the United States to reconsider its relationship with Tibet. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, both the War and the State Departments believed the US Air Force should establish a base of operations in China to support Chinese resistance against Japan. In response to the Chinese request, Washington negotiated an agreement with Tibet to establish a route through that country and into China.

The United States and Tibet officially came into contact with each other in 1942 when Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the CIA, sent in the first US mission to Tibet ostensibly to gather information on an alternative to the Burma Road.² This route, which earlier connected India to China through south Tibet, was cut off by Japanese. The Tibetan government, citing Tibetan neutrality, refused permission. It was motivated by the Tibetan fear that such a route would give China easy access for the control of Tibet. The mission led by Captain Ilia Tolstoy, an OSS intelligence officer, met with

the Dalai Lama and delivered a letter from President Roosevelt expressing his interest in Tibet and its people.³

The State Department of the United States resisted this officially sanctioned trip, the delivery of the presidential letter, and a subsequent transfer of long-range radio transmitters by the OSS. The State Department did not want the United States to do anything that might offend the Nationalist Chinese government and their claim to Tibet.⁴ The difference of opinion between the OSS and the State Department about how to handle Tibet continued to grow and ultimately emerged along two separate tracks during the Eisenhower administration.

United States policy concerning the recognition of Tibet was further defined in late 1947 and early 1948 with the dispatch of a trade mission by the Dalai Lama's government to the United States as well as to India, Great Britain and several other countries.⁵ The State Department of the United States was extremely wary that such a visit by the Tibetan delegation could imply a change in the US policy for Tibet and wanted to prevent that perception from arising in either the Tibetan or Nationalist Chinese governments. The delegation which was interested in purchasing gold and silver as well as expanding trade with the United States, was provided with visas normally

⁴ Ibid., 391-2, Grunfeld, n.2, pp. 82-3
⁵ Grunfeld, n.2, p. 85
issued to visitors representing states not recognized by the US government.\textsuperscript{6} Prior to their departure from India, the US Ambassador to India told the Tibetan representatives that “It was the policy of the US government to recognize the suzerainty of China over Tibet.”\textsuperscript{7}

Once in the United States, the mission was told that it can not meet President Truman without being accompanied by the Nationalist Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Wellington Koo. Tibetans rejected this condition and, in the end, were able to exclude the Chinese by meeting with Secretary of State George. C. Marshall instead.\textsuperscript{8} The American government, primarily the State Department, was not inclined to do anything concerning Tibet, which would offend Nationalist government of China. During this period, Chiang’s regime, with the US support was fighting for its life against the communists. The United States could hardly afford to undermine the legitimacy of its ally. With the outcome in China still open to question, the Truman administration chose to maintain the status quo with respect to Tibet.

In January 1949, the US Embassy in New Delhi began to question that status quo which in turn led to a review, within the State Department, of US policy towards Tibet. The Embassy suggested that “if for example, the communists succeed in controlling all of China or some equivalent far-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid, 87
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid.7
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reaching development takes place, the US government should be prepared to treat Tibet as an independent country for all intents and purposes."

An internal memorandum, written in April 1949 by the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, offers much insight into the thinking within the State Department at that time concerning the question of recognition for Tibet. The case for recognition had five components including the belief that Tibet would remain "one of the few non-communist bastions" in Asia, that the Chinese government was stable and that the Chinese government could not exert "effective de facto authority in Tibet". It was also pointed out that it was in the interest of the United States to treat Tibet independently if it wanted to resist communist infiltration and to ensure that Tibetan relations with the outside expanded towards the liberal democratic world and not towards the communists.

Opposition to recognizing an independent Tibet also put forward their arguments. First it was argued that a "basic principle of United States policy towards China has been respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Recognition of Tibet would abandon this principle and have important implications for future relations with the Chinese. Second, such recognition would limit the effectiveness of American objections to Soviet

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9 FRUS 1949 9, P. 1065
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., pp. 1065-66
12 Ibid.
attempts to detach portion of northern China, which were ongoing that time. The belief was that United States recognition might also accelerate Soviet efforts to place Tibet under communist rule.

The memorandum noted that Tibet was not seen by those opposed to recognition as being strategically or ideologically important for the United States in a practical sense. India’s relationship with Tibet emerged as a significant concern: "The answer to what measures of a practical nature can be taken appears to lie largely with India, which now controls Tibet’s access to the West. If India cooperates with the West the importance of Tibet both ideologically and strategically will be considerably less. If India does not cooperate with the west the difficulties in the way of utilizing Tibet, as a bastion for the West would be enormously magnified."

Furthermore, the United States developed a plan on how the government should deal with the Tibet under Chinese communist rule. The following paragraph from the same document highlights the debate and provides insight into the policy of Truman administration, which set the stage for its successor administration. It states: "The nature of developments will affect the policy which we should adopt toward Tibet in the future. If for example the communists should take over all of China proper and the National Government should disappear, we would be faced with the alternative of (1) treating Tibet as under the authority of the communists government -- which we should clearly wish to avoid or (2) dealing with Tibet as for all intents and

\[13\] Ibid, p. 1067
purposes independent. The latter policy would clearly be to our advantage. If however the communists take over China proper but a émigré National Government should continue to exist, we would then have to decide our policy toward Tibet partly in the light of our policy towards the émigré Government. The question would arise whether we should place emphasis on Tibet's independence by formally recognizing it and by sponsoring it's application for membership in the United Nations or whether we should avoid stressing the matter of independence but should merely maintain direct relations with Tibet without a public change of policy.”

In October 1949, an American radio broadcaster Lowel Thomas and his son, who visited Tibet, gave their impressions of Tibet and the Dalai Lama to President Truman and Secretary of State. Thomas carried a request from the Tibetan government for American help in resistance against the Chinese communists. Although tremendously sympathetic to the Tibetan struggle against Chinese communists, Thomas recognized that the United States had limited ability to provide over military support to this struggle.

Perhaps because of this realization of its inability to move an army over the Himalayas, the United States paid increasing attention to using India either as a surrogate or as a conduit for American efforts. US Embassy in New Delhi had already expanded its efforts to influence India's relations with Tibet. The Embassy was also involved in coordinating with Tibetan refugees in the

14 Ibid, pp. 1070-71
15 Grunfeld, n.2, p. 90
Darjiling and Kalimpong. Primarily aimed at gathering information it also resulted in efforts aimed at persuading the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet.

The United States government was extremely interested in assisting Tibet through India. The Indian government however resisted it in order to maintain its policy of nonalignment and to avoid provoking the Chinese. In late 1949 the Dalai Lama requested permission to send mission to India, Nepal, Great Britain and the United States in order to seek help. The Indian government, which was firmly opposed to the trip, did not want to act as the intermediary between the United States and Tibet. The State Department relayed to the Tibetans that the United States government was not at present in a position to lend effective aid to Tibet.\textsuperscript{16}

When communist China invaded Tibet in 1950, United States condemned the Chinese invasion but did not do more than this. It was preoccupied in Korean War. The United States looked toward Britain and India to take the lead in raising the Tibetan issue at the United Nations. Britain had treaty relations with Tibet during its rule of India, which inherited these treaty relations from Britain when it became independent in 1947. But both India and Britain, for different reasons, played down the Tibet issue. Freed from colonial rule, India, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, had a grand vision of a new united Asia, prosperous and socialist, challenging the Western dominance of the world. In this vision, China was the key, and a little irritant like Tibet must not be allowed to tarnish it.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{FRUS} 1950 6, pp. 284-94
Faced with British indifference and Indian resistance on the Tibetan issue, the best the United States could do was to adopt an ineffectual wait and see policy. Forgotten was the earlier US determination to recognize Tibetan independence in the event of Chinese invasion of Tibet. Even El Salvador's attempt to raise the question of Tibet at the UN General Assembly was put in the back burner at the instigation of the United States. Having no other options left, Tibet was forced to negotiate a settlement with the People's Republic of China.

Indian influence remained critical to the development of the US policy during the Eisenhower administration as well. By mid 1950, the United States had assumed lead role in the international community with respect to Tibet. Britain had effectively turned over its interests in Tibet to India and was not inclined to get involved again. India did not want to antagonize China. The nationalists had little credibility with Tibetan government because of their view that Tibet continued to be an integral part of China. 17

Negotiation between Lhasa and Beijing began in 1950, punctuated by sporadic fighting that summer. The talks proved fruitless, and by October 7 the PLA had overcome the small and disorganized Tibetan resistance. In November 1950 the Dalai Lama assumed power from his regent. Shortly after this United Nations voted unanimously to postpone a vote on Tibet's appeal for assistance to prepare for potential operations against the Chinese communist regime. The United States which had initially supported Tibet's appeal

17 Grunfeld, n.2, pp.92-93; Goldstein, n. 3, p. 635; FRUS 1950 6, p. 365
changed its stand partly because it did not want to be perceived as a colonialist power by the Asian states many of whom were under colonial rule till recently.

After the Chinese army entered Tibet, the US State Department affirmed in a letter to the British Embassy dated December 30, 1950, that Washington “believes that the Tibetan people have the same inherent right as any other to have the determining voice in its political destiny” and the United States considered recognizing an independent Tibet “should developments warrant.” 18

In early 1951 with PLA occupying much of Tibet and poised outside of Lhasa, a Tibetan delegation traveled to Beijing to negotiate a settlement. On May 23, 1951, the Tibetan delegation signed the 17 point Agreement” which gave PLA free rein in Tibet and granted the PRC control over Tibet’s foreign affairs and defense all in exchange for religious and political autonomy.

This agreement was viewed by the State Department to have been signed under duress and consequently void: “The United States Government, which has never recognized the Chinese communist regime, neither recognizes nor condones the so-called “agreement” of the May 1951 under which the Chinese communists deprived the Tibetan people of the de-facto autonomy which they had long enjoyed.” 19 The exploitation of Tibet as a means of

18 FRUS (1950): China, vol. 6 (1976), p. 613
19 Consulate, Calcutta to Department of State, 16 July 1951, Box 4227, SDF 79 BB, 1950-1954 NA; FRUS 1951 7 pt. 2, 1986; Goldstein, n.3, p.73
pressure and as a propaganda tool would become increasingly important during Eisenhower period.

In 1951 American contacts with Tibetan intermediaries expanded significantly. These intermediaries included Dalai Lama's brother Thubten Norbu, trade representative Tsepon Shakabpa and Heinrich Harrer, an Austrian confidant of the Dalai Lama. Through the American Consulate in Calcutta and the US Embassy in New Delhi, these intermediaries pressed for US support to Tibetan resistance groups in Tibet, possible asylum for the Dalai Lama and his entourage, and financial assistance. For its part United States pushed hard to get the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet and renounce the Sino-Tibetan Agreement. The Dalai Lama was on pilgrimage tour to India at that time.

The United States relayed that if the Dalai Lama did leave Tibet, the US government was prepared to issue a public statement supporting the Dalai Lama's renouncement of the 17-Point Agreement, against in bringing Tibet's case to the United Nations, and work to get the Dalai Lama asylum either in India or Thailand. In addition the United States was willing to provide some financial aid and "light arms" in support of the Tibetan resistance. While the reason remains unclear, the Dalai Lama eventually decided against going into exile and returned to Lhasa. The 1951 exchange between the Tibetans and

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20 FRUS 1951 7, pt. 2, pp. 1708-09

21 FRUS 1951 7, pt. 2, pp. 1744-45
Americans were critical because they set the tone for future negotiations with the Tibetans and also significantly shaped the US Tibetans relationship.

During this period, United States remained extremely concerned that its involvement with the Tibetans would be exposed publicly. The State Department was unwilling to forward letters with official US letterhead through intermediaries to the Dalai Lama. Telegrams between Washington and US envoys in India describe their fears. "If such document fell into communist Chinese hands, it might be used as evidence that US endeavors imperialistically to interfere in the internal affairs of Tibet and to disrupt ostensibly friendly relations between China and Tibet. It might was possible, if Tibetans were hard pressed in further negotiations with communist Chinese, that Tibetans might use such a document to reinforce their position. Revelations of the document with misconstruction placed on it by communist world would undoubtedly be useful in depicting US to Asia in role cast for by our adversaries. Revelation would probably be damaging to us with respect to Indian resentment toward Chinese People's Republic, which may develop as communist control over Tibet is consolidated." 22

Miscommunication also affected the Tibetan-American discussions. With respect to the critical area of Tibetan independence, the United States perceived that it was having difficulty getting its point across because of "the fact that the Tibetan language does not differentiate between the concepts of

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22 FRUS 1951 7, pt. 2, pp. 1786-89
autonomy and complete independence".\textsuperscript{23} US government also appeared to have some problems with the intermediaries themselves. A State Department telegram relates, "unreliable intermediaries figured critically in failure of the effort to persuade the Dalai Lama to leave Yatung for India."\textsuperscript{24} These reliability problems were compounded by the perception that the intermediaries were involved with other parties in addition to the Tibetans. George Patterson was regarded as a British agent whereas wife of Gyalo Thondup, another brother of the Dalai Lama to be a Nationalist Chinese agent.

The Dalai Lama’s brother, Thubten Norbu and Gyalo Thondup emerged as the primary link between the Dalai Lama and the United States. In July 1951 Norbu traveled to the United States from India. He explained that United States should not view Dalai Lama’s adjustment to Chinese communist rule as a reason to break contact with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people. By August 1952 there was some frustration about the ability of the United States to impact upon the Tibetan situation.

The United States policy towards Tibet during Eisenhower administration had three overlapping goals: First, US policy sought to provide limited support to Tibet, which was eventually carried out both overtly and covertly. Second, American decision-makers were intent on exploiting the Tibetan issue in order to advance US interests around Tibet itself and within

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p. 1754

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 1769
the international community. Finally, United States policy towards Tibet was continuously subordinated to other, more important American interests in the region. From 1953 to 1961, American policy remained firmly in support of autonomy but did not go further with respect to recognizing Tibet as a sovereign state.  

By 1957 Tibet was the special subject of discussion of the National Security Council. On January 28 that year Secretary of State Dulles announced in a nationwide address that China had taken Tibet by force. A top-secret review of China policy by the State Department in December regarded Tibet as a country on par with Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, possibly ready for admission to the United Nations. In fact in September 1959, a State Department spokesman said that the United States "has never recognized the pretension to sovereignty over Tibet put forward by the Chinese communist regime."  

Tensions between the PLA and the Tibetans boiled over in March 1959, resulting in a large-scale demonstrations and riots in Lhasa. After 1959 Tibetan revolt against the communist Chinese, which led the Dalai Lama to flee into exile in India, the US government's vacillations over implementing its Tibet policy ended with its clearly stated refusal to accept China's occupation of Tibet and its references to Tibetan autonomy. Eisenhower

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administration broadened the US position to include a statement that within the principle of self-determination, the people of Tibet "should have the determining voice in their own political destiny."

The United States also provided to Tibet covert assistance in the form of central intelligence gathering effort in 1951, that was latter expanded to include weapons shipment and guerilla training. Between 1956 and 1961, the US Central Intelligence Agency made sporadic airdrops of arms, ammunition and other material to guerrillas in Tibet, and also provided training to Tibetans both at US military bases in Asia and at Camp Hale in Colorado. At the latter facility, Tibetan guerrillas were trained in mountain warfare under a project referred to as the "Garden Operation". The guerrillas were to parachute into Tibet and eventually form the nucleus of an anti-Chinese uprising. After 1959 the Tibetan guerrilla base was opened in 'Mustang Valley' in Western Nepal, which is surrounded on three sides by Chinese occupied Tibet. From this advantageous position Tibetan guerrillas attacked Chinese army with the material supplied by CIA. This assistance was part of the larger US policy, which sought to use covert operations to counter the global communist threat.

American policy was also designed to lend support by helping bring the attention to the plight of the Tibetans especially in the aftermath of the 1959

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27 Statement by Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter, date South Asia (1) Box 6 Subject subseries, OSANSA, WHO, DDEL; Statement by Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter, date South Asia (1) Box 6 Subject subseries, OSANSA, WHO, DDEL;
revolt. This included efforts by the Eisenhower administration, operating behind the scenes to bring the Tibetan case to the United Nations. In addition, considerable humanitarian assistance was raised through non-governmental sources following a mass exodus of Tibetan refugees to India in 1959 and 1960.

American policy was also designed to exploit Tibet in a way which would further United States strategy aimed at the global containment of communism. This included preventing the recognition of the government of the People’s Republic of China and its admission to the United Nations. Policy towards Tibet during this period also sought to use the area as a base from which the United States could generate pressure on China through support for the Tibetan rebel movement.

Within the United Nations, the United States used outrage over the Chinese communist suppression of Tibetans to solidify support for its efforts to keep communist China from gaining admission to the world body. Successive US administrations strongly condemned Chinese human rights practices and supported all three UN General Assembly resolutions of 1959, 1961, and 1965 that urged China to withdraw from Tibet. During the debate

29 Murphy to Gyal Thondup, 4 November 1959, Box 3951, State Decimal file 793 B (Tibet) SDF 793 b), 1955-1959, NA
30 John Pardos, President’s Secret Wars: CIA And Pentagon Covert Operations Since World War II (New York : William Morrow and Co., 1986), pp. 149-170
on the 1961 UN resolution, the US delegate referred to the Chinese as “foreign oppressors” in Tibet, and further cited the 1959 and 1961 International Commission of Jurist’s reports that concluded that Tibet had been independent prior to the 1950 invasion. During the 826th plenary meeting, Henry Cabot Lodge of United States stated that the communists had come to Tibet not for reform but for domination. He further said that destroying the Tibetan way of life and introducing the communes was neither reform nor progress but a crime which the whole civilized world should condemn. Following the revolt, the United States also tried to exploit the Tibetan issue in order to arouse Asian, in particular South Asian indignation against the communist Chinese.

Tibet and its related issues were subordinated to greater US interests in the region, primarily those related to India and the Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan. Although the United States hoped to develop a partnership with India against the Chinese communists, US efforts were subordinated to Indian concerns and India’s desire to maintain good relations with the People’s Republic of China. United States policy towards Tibet was also somewhat subordinated to Nationalist Chinese interests. The Kuomintang’s position that “Tibet has been and is a part of China” greatly limited American flexibility in dealing with Tibet.

US policy towards Tibet faced another dilemma. Asians resistance to having another western power lead them coupled with Chinese attacks on the “imperialists” involvement in Tibet, and the Tibetans own desire to keep the perception from arising that the United States was controlling them, all conspired to force United States to maintain an approach which was necessarily low key. United States government document show that by 1963 the CIA admitted that its guerilla training and support program “Garden Operation” was “not especially productive”. The basic principle that lay behind the US position from 1949 to 1972 was its desire to contain communist expansion in Asia, and Tibet occupied a place in the US strategy aimed at isolating and overthrowing of Chinese Communist government.

However, this US honeymoon with the Tibetan resistance movement did not last long. Following the “Ping-Pong diplomacy” which led to the United States using the strategic weight of China against the Soviet Union during the Nixon-Kissinger tenure, the CIA’s overt support to the Tibetan resistance movement stopped. And in a dramatic break with its past policy, the United States unequivocally recognized that “Tibet is a part of China”. United States positions on Tibet from the Nixon-Ford Administrations to the Carter Administration underwent dramatic changes. The United States relinquished military and financial commitment to the Tibetans. More importantly change from US position on the legal status of Tibet as an autonomous country under the suzerainty of China to recognizing Tibet as part of China. Nixon

administration had to make some choices regarding policy toward Tibet when it decided finally to makeup with China.

One month before President Nixon’s announcement on July 15, 1971 of his forthcoming visit to Beijing, the United States International Agency finished a film titled “Man from a Missing Land”. The film depicted the Chinese takeover of Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama into India in 1959. President Nixon’s National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger ordered the USIA to shelve the film indefinitely fearing it would probably jeopardize President Nixon’s trip to China in February 1972. Shortly before the trip the Administration also summarily ended CIA military and financial assistance to the Tibetan guerrillas in Mustang, Nepal.

Need for change in the US Tibet policy was guided by two factors. First, the failure of USA in Indo-China and second, the worsening Sino-Soviet conflict. United States realized that a détente with China would be extremely effective in strengthening its negotiating position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The trade interest of the United States also called for normal relations with the Beijing as the former had already suffered a big economic loss by being deprived of vast and potential Chinese market of eighty crore people. On the other hand China was also interested to establish mutual relationship with the United States as it would help get China a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. And United States did not want its Tibet policy to be an obstacle in its rapprochement with China. However the Nixon administration did not

make new commitments to China on other issues concerning Tibet. The administration did not try to correct the past US position on the legal status of Tibet that "the United States considers Tibet as an autonomous country under the suzerainty of China" with the right to self-determination. Nor did the US government make an attempt to alter the past US description of the Dalai Lama as the "Spiritual and Temporal ruler of Tibet." 38

The Tibet issue resurfaced openly in the bilateral relationship between US and Tibetans as a result of United States détente with the Soviet Union and coolness in rapprochement between United States and China in 1974-75 due to differences over Taiwan. On Tibet issue Ford Administration’s strategy was to calm down Chinese government, while simultaneously not appearing to yield too much to the Chinese side, then avoiding strong criticisms from conservative republicans and human rights activists in the United States.

The matter that reminded the tension between United States and China on Tibet was the existence of the Tibet Office of the Dalai Lama in New York. On July 30, 1974, the Chinese Liaison Office in Washington asked the Nixon Administration to ban the Tibet Office, which the Chinese side said was "the agent of the traitor Dalai," and was spreading "all sorts of slanders against our great socialist motherland." When Chinese got the news that a Tibetan song troupe from Dharmasala was to tour the United States in October 1975, the

37 "Statement of US Government Support to Tibetan Traitors Activities", *Beijing Review*, October 17, 1975, p. 4

Chinese Liaison Office made another representation to the State Department on August 8, 1975 demanding US government stop the troupe from coming to America and raised the issue of banning the office again. The Ford Administration rejected both the demands claiming that Tibetan activities were in accord with the constitution and the law of the United States.39

Kissinger before visiting China to prepare for President Ford's trip to Beijing in December 1975 attempted to pacify the Chinese government. While persuading the Chinese to ignore the existence of the Tibet Office in New York, and tour of the Tibetan dance troupe, the Dalai Lama was refused a visa by the state Department in September to represent Buddhists at a world religious conference in New York.40 A State Department spokesman stated on October 13 that the Chinese concern over the Tibet Office and the troupe were the result of the misunderstanding of the political system of United States" and that "none of our policies has a premise that Tibet is not a part of China".41 For the first time since rapprochement, the US government made a statement referring to the legal status of Tibet significantly different from its past position that the Tibet was an independent country under China's sovereignty. All this was to avoid political embarrassment for Kissinger and the President.

39 Walter S. Robertson, US Representative to the General Assembly, "General Assembly again decides not to consider question of Chinese representation", Department of State Bulletin, October 12, 1959, p. 519


at the time of their trips to China. It was during Ford Administration that Tibetan uprising of 1959 was celebrated in United States for the first time.\textsuperscript{42}

Tibet issue became more noticeable during Carter Administration. Carter Administration confronted a greater dilemma on the Tibet issue. While Carter professed a strong personal belief in self-determination and human rights, he had also decided in the early days of the Administration to normalize relations with China within his term of office.

Harry. E. T. Thayer, Department of State Director for People's Republic of China and Mongolia Affairs, stated the administration's policy in a letter dated March 10, 1977 to Jan Anderson, a Swedish post-doctoral chemist researching at an American University. Thayer's letter stated, "The People's Republic of China exercises full control over Tibet and considers it to be an integral part of China. No United States policy or action is based on the premise that Tibet is not a part of China and that the United States does not recognize the Dalai Lama in any respect as the head of the government of Tibet. The commitment of this administration and of the president personally to promote human rights throughout the world has been stated clearly, and there is no hard and fast rule that will determine when and how we speak out with respect to human rights in a particular case."\textsuperscript{43} For the first time since the rapprochement with China, the US government acknowledged China's effective control of Tibet, an implicit recognition of China's sovereignty over Tibet. In 1978, the United States government stated unequivocally for the first

\textsuperscript{42} "Tibetan uprising observed in NY", Tibetan Review, April 1976, p. 7

\textsuperscript{43} "US Stand on Tibet is Unchanged" Tibetans Review, June 1977, pp. 5-6
time that Tibet was a part of People's Republic of China, without mentioning the autonomy suzerainty link. Official policy has since then been the full acceptance of China's position, much to the displeasure of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan nationalists.

Tibetans and their American sympathizers used a two track lobbying strategy that was to prove successful again and again for getting the US government to meet their demands-namely, to publicize their issue in the American press and to lobby Congress to exert pressure on the executive branch to change policies. One of the main demands was passports to be stamped Tibet as place of birth. Resultant new policy was that "US citizens born abroad may now list the city or town of their birth rather than the country of birth as it is presently known." Administration's solution was an act of skillful balancing of its own interests on the Tibet matter.

Carter administration also resolved the dilemma of the Dalai Lama's visit to the United States in 1978 by notifying that it saw no obstacles in granting the Dalai Lama a visa, but the visit would be "a spiritual visit by a religious leader if it took place". This enabled the US administration to dissociate itself from any political statements the Dalai Lama might make during his trip. The Dalai Lama's 1979 tour of the United States was a turning point in the expansion of Tibetan exiles' political influence in the United States.45

44 "Birth Place: Lhasa", Tibetan Review, April 1979, p. 24

45 American Press Reports on the Dalai Lama's visits, Tibetan Review, September 1979, pp. 7-11; October 1979, pp. 7-18; November 1979, pp. 18-27
During the 1970's and early 1980's the strategic importance of China as a counterweight against the Soviet Union was a predominant premise of various US administration's relations with China. After reaching an agreement with the United States on US arms sales to Taiwan on August 17, 1982, which stabilized Sino-American relations, China pursued an independent foreign policy and took actions to improve relations with the Soviet Union.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan entered the White House. He revived Soviet-American cold war and blamed the Soviet Union for creating all trouble in Asia. To check this, the USA formed military axis among China, Japan and Pakistan. As China was expected to be the linchpin of this alliance, it remained a favorite of United States America. So naturally, Reagan too had been unable to annoy China and consequently ensured his nation's interest in Asia and Pacific region by not stressing the cause of Tibet.

During the last two years of the Reagan Administration, a shift of US policy on the issue of Tibet occurred in two aspects. First, Congress initiated and President Reagan approved legislation (H.R.1777) to provide tangible material assistance to Tibetan exiles in Dharmsala, India. Second, the US government started to criticize China for the human rights situation in Tibet and to monitor developments there.

Deng Xiaoping's adopted a more liberal policy toward Tibet. However, neither the residents of Tibet and the Tibetans in exile led by the Dalai Lama nor their US supporters were satisfied. On July 24, 1985, 91 members of Congress signed a letter sent to the Chinese government that expressed support for direct talks between Beijing and the Dalai Lama. The letter also
urged the Chinese government to “grant the very reasonable and justified aspirations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his people every consideration.”

Reagan administration’s review conducted by Secretary of State George Shultz, reexamined China's value to the United States and concluded that China could be treated as a regional power that had parallel security concerns with the United States. This reflected President Reagan's perception of America’s strength in world politics. However, the deadlock between China and Soviet Union over three issues, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the reduction of Soviet troops deployed along Sino-Soviet borders and in Mongolia, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea, still meant that China represented a significant strategic value for United States. But the Soviet factor in US-China relations diminished in 1985-1986 due to new thinking in Soviet foreign policy of Gorvachev government, abandoning military competition with the United states and seeking political and negotiated solutions of regional and international conflicts.

It was against this broad background of the changing nature of US-China relations that Tibet became an issue in US China policy in the Reagan administration in 1987 and 1988. The Tibet issue surged in US Congress when American Public and American press became aware of Tibet's unique culture.


47 George P. Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph: My years as secretary of state (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 381-400

48 David Holloway, "Gorbachev's New Thinking", Foreign Affairs (New York) 68, no.1: 72
and religion and the problems of Tibet, including conflicts of interests between Tibetans and Han Chinese and the Dalai Lama's position on the issue. The awareness, apart from the energetic lobbying activities of Tibetan exiles in the United States throughout the 1980's, was partially a result of increased access of Americans to Tibet proper. Since 1987, Congressional support for the Tibetan cause has been stronger than earlier and the legislature has passed a number of resolutions relating to the situation in Tibet.

On May 20, 1987, Rep. Rose together with Rep. Benjamin Gilman and Rep. Geralds Solomon introduced H.R.2476, a bill entitled "Human Rights violations in Tibet by the People's Republic of China" in the House. On June 18, 1987, the revised version of H.R.2476 was passed by the House as an amendment to H.R.1777 by voice vote. A basic consensus existed in the house that Congress should voice concern on the need to promote Tibetan cultural heritage and human rights in Tibet and that the United States should encourage the Chinese government to conduct a dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The amendment accused China of having imposed its rule over Tibet through military force since 1949 and causing “political instability, imprisonment and large-scale famine” that had resulted in the deaths of more than one million people there. The Senate's version of the amendment was even stronger, requiring the President to determine that China was easing human rights abuses in Tibet before any arms sales to China could be

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49 Congressional record, 19 May 1987, E-1895.
approved. It also implied that Tibet ought to be an independent state.\textsuperscript{50}

Stung by such criticism, the Chinese government denied the charges of human rights violations and pointed to the progress it had made; it also suggested in typically polite and indirect fashion that the United States should not interfere with China's internal affairs. To show Americans the progress it had made, Beijing invited former President Carter to visit Tibet. Thus, shortly after the House had approved its amendment, Carter and his wife Rosalyn visited Lhasa for two days as guest of the Chinese government. According to the \textit{Beijing Review}, Carter said that he was "pleased to see that freedom of religion and freedom of worship are flourishing in Tibet" and also commented that the Congress members who had voted in support of the June legislation would "have a different view on the amendments" after he told them what he saw.\textsuperscript{51} After meeting with Deng, Carter subsequently called a news conference in Beijing on June 29 and diplomatically said that remarks attributed to him were accurate in the context of comparing the then-present conditions with those of the Cultural Revolution. But the former president added that there was a long way to go before the freedom of the pre-Cultural Revolution stage would be restored.

In September, the Dalai Lama visited the United States for ten days at the invitation of the US Congress. Efforts of the local Tibetan lobby paid off with a warm welcome for the Dalai Lama in Washington. On September 21, 1987, the Dalai Lama addressed the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Congressional Quarterly Almanac}, 1987 (Washington DC, Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1988), pp. 145-54

the Capitol Hill.\textsuperscript{52} The Dalai Lama stressed the political aspect of the Tibet issue and the benefits of a free Tibet to the United States and other countries. Later, the Dalai Lama put forward a five-point peace proposal, which would serve as a basis for negotiation with the Chinese government. Under this plan, Tibet would recognize Chinese sovereignty in exchange for a withdrawal of Chinese military forces and a much higher degree of political and cultural autonomy.

On September 27, 1987 some senators and representatives collectively sent a letter to the Chinese Premiere Zhao-Ziyang expressing their full support for the Dalai Lama's five-point proposal.\textsuperscript{53} The \textit{New York Times} also published an editorial urging the State Department to “stand up for decency in Tibet.”\textsuperscript{54} The Chinese government’s anger at the unprecedented success of the Dalai Lama’s visit to the United States was obvious. It accused Congress of flagrant interference in China’s internal affairs, and China’s Foreign Affairs Minister made a lengthy statement expressing both regret and strong dissatisfaction that the US government had allowed the Dalai Lama—China saw acting as a political leader rather than as a spiritual one- to even visit the US, let alone indulge in political activities while there.

The Dalai Lama’s Washington visit and Congress’s support for the Tibetan nationalist cause fueled the Tibetans will to rebel against Beijing. The


\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Congressional Record}, October 1, 1987, H-8079\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Congressional Record}, October 1, 1987, H-8079

three demonstrations that took place in Lhasa in September and October 1987 were the largest protests since the uprising of 1959. Congress passed several resolutions, including an amendment to the budget bill for the State Department in December 1987 that urged the White House to make the treatment of the Tibetan people "an important factor" in the conduct of its relations with Beijing. The Tibet issue had become important for the American public, and so it had become an important factor in Sino-American relations for Congress.

Tibet supporters in Congress continued to consolidate their achievements by focusing attention on the Chinese suppression of the protests in Lhasa that were spearheaded by monks. On November 17, Representatives Rose and Lantos in the name of Congressional Human Rights Caucus organized a rally in conjunction with US-Tibet committee in front of Capitol Hill.

From 1972 to 1987 the American executive branch's Tibet policy was inconsistent, but generally it did accept the premise that Tibet was a part of China or, at the very least, that China had the right to rule Tibet as a protectorate or suzerain. Although the United States encouraged Tibetans to resist the communist advance for ideological reasons, Washington was careful not to provoke Beijing by supporting the Tibetan nationalist demands. Such support might have jeopardized geopolitical and economic interests of the United States in maintaining a friendly relationship with China. The Tibet

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55 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1987, pp. 145-54
issue was not to become a problem for the bilateral relationship, and Tibet was not a consideration in America’s China policy.56

The final version of the section on Tibet in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 1988 and 1989 that emerged from the conference and was finally approved by President Reagan was a result of two factors. First, an unyielding attitude of Congress towards the Chinese government and second, a compromise with executive branch of the US government. Accepting the stronger Senate version, Congress expressed heightened concern over the human rights situation in Tibet and more importantly demonstrated sympathy for the cause of Tibetan independence. On the political status of Tibet, it adopted the strong position of the Pell-Helms amendment that China “invaded and occupied Tibet” and that “the Chinese government has exercised dominion over the Tibetan people, who had always considered themselves as independent, through the presence of a large occupation force”. It stated that United States should urge China to establish a constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama on the future of Tibet. It further stated that the secretary of the state should address and call attention to the rights of the Tibetan people, as well as other non-Han-Chinese within the People's Republic of China. November 1987 Act stated that “the United States should make the treatment of the Tibetan people an important factor in its conduct of relations with People's Republic of China”.

The Reagan Administration was worried about congressional initiatives on the issue of Tibet because of its potential for destabilizing US-China relations. Another reason for Reagan administrations hesitancy to get involved in the Tibet issue was feasibility assessment that a settlement of the political future of Tibet was impossible against the will of a stable Chinese government or through foreign intervention. This assessment was based on the large disparities in economic and military power and population between the Tibetans and the Chinese; the importance of Tibet to China’s national survival in terms of its security, territorial integrity and national unity and the solid consensus among Chinese to retain control of Tibet; and that no ordinary foreign means would be sufficient to achieve Tibet’s independence for the Tibetans.

The Reagan administration not only refused to join in the attacks on Chinese policies toward Tibet, but also defended Beijing and opposed the Senate amendment of December 1987. One State Department official described the Senate’s account of the situation in Tibet as “inaccurate, incomplete, and misleading.” Another defense came from J. Stapleton Roy, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asians and Pacific Affairs and later US ambassador to China, in his October 1987 testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on Human Rights and East Asian Affairs. Speaking on the heels of Tibet’s worst riots in nearly 30 years, Roy stated that, when looking at China’s treatment of Tibet, it was important to

bear in mind China’s “traditional Confucian stress on authority and obedience”; the Chinese leader’s memories of China’s weakness in the modern era; and their fear that democratization “in a country of a billion people, mostly poor, would lead to a breakdown of social order and anarchy.” While condemning China’s human rights record in Tibet, Roy took the Dalai Lama to task for having sought a travel visa as a religious leader only to engage in political activities upon his arrival in the US. Adopting the Dalai Lama’s political agenda, Roy argued, would be “contrary to US policy” and “would constitute interference in the internal affairs of another country.”

Clearly, Congress and the White House differed in their opinions on the Tibet issue. Congress was more concerned about the human rights problem in Tibet and was unhappy with the Reagan administration. Congress in 1988 passed a resolution supporting the Dalai Lama’s five-point proposal. With public concern growing, several high-ranking American officials visited Tibet in 1988. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Roy went there first in April, followed by Ambassador to China Winston Lord in August, and a delegation of three senators in September. The senators expressed their disappointment over reported human rights abuses in the region, especially the mistreatment of imprisoned demonstrators, and they succeeded in arousing Congressional concern over the Tibet issue to its highest level.

The response of the State Department to Congress’s criticism of the general situation in Tibet was to balance the Chinese version of its records in

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Tibet after the turmoil of Cultural Revolution against the Tibetan version in an effort to protect US-China relations from damage by Congressional actions.

In the next chapter we will find out the nature and intensity of the public support to the Tibet issue in the United States of America. Role of Tibet Support Groups, media, Dharma Centers (Religious Centers), movie stars and individual initiatives is analyzed.