CHAPTER SIX

Role of CIA in the Tibetan Protest Movement
External assistance of guerrilla forces operating against the common enemy has been usual practice by super powers and colonialists. The guerrilla groups need money to motivate people to join their activities, to procure materials like arms and ammunition and to keep their network active. In the post world war II, Washington perceived Moscow and China as her arch enemies. Washington's dealing with Khamba guerrillas shows that they got their resources from CIA, the US Central Intelligence Agency.

As soon as China took over Tibet, the protest against the Chinese hegemony arrived at the simmering point. The revolt that broke out in Kham and Amdo created the space for CIA to intrude in Tibetan affairs. As CIA director succinctly explained, the situation offered an ideal opportunity for the CIA agencies to provide clandestine assistance to the Tibetan rebels to harass the Chinese.

Tibet was popularly perceived as a classic case in which the “evil of communism” was most dramatically demonstrated: Asia’s most powerful army invading a powerless and peaceful country, goddess communist subjugating a God-fearing people, a classic case of David versus Goliath. The issue of Tibet therefore, as packaged in America then, went deeper into the “tradition” and “national soul” of Tibet.¹

In order to understand the CIA involvement in Tibetan Protest movement, it is necessary to contextually analyse the US policy toward Tibet at that point of time, i.e., in 1950s and late 1970s.

The evolution of the US China policy can be divided into two phases. In the first phase (1950s), the US administration broached the very notion of eradication and crushing of communism in Asia. In the process she tried to play Tibet card

¹ Dawa Norbu, China’s Tibet Policy (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 65.
against China. The anti-communist paradigm was embarked to isolate and weaken China politically and economically in Asia, which was threatening her geo-strategic interests in the Asian region. Thus, when armed conflict erupted between the Chinese cadres and Tibetan guerrillas, the US (CIA) grabbed the opportunity by supporting guerrillas to destabilise the Chinese communist government.

The second phase is roughly the late 1970s. The US administration stopped military and financial support to Tibetan guerrillas and recognised Chinese authority over Tibet. From late sixties onward her policy towards China shifted from containment to rapprochement. Subsequently, the US envisaged the "new world view" of integration of China into the "family of nations". With such a notion, the US established friendly diplomatic relation with China along with the goodwill gesture of withdrawal of two thirds of troops from Taiwan after Vietnam War, supported China to secure seat in United Nations and acknowledged Peking as the sole legitimate government of China. The flexible policy of abandoning the containment of the Chinese and pursuing friendly rapprochement benefited the US by and large in all fronts in the 1980s.

Earlier, the profile of US affinity with Tibet was very low. And her involvement in Tibetan affairs was only peripheral, sporadic and unofficial. William Woodville Rockhill is the first person of American origin who entered Tibet, and that was in 18th Century. He was explorer scholar, author and an American ambassador to China. In 1888, he resigned from the diplomatic service


and set out his journey to reach Lhasa, but could not materialize. But by 1908, he
became the first American Minister to China and well acquainted with the Dalai
Lama at Wu-Tai Shan, the Buddhist sacred mountain near Peking, where the Dalai
Lama had fled four years earlier in the face of the armed Younghusband expedition,
sent by British to force the open negotiation with the Tibetans. In this brief meeting,
the Dalai Lama sought for American intervention, as he had envisaged consolidation
of his power and return to Tibet. The Dalai Lama told Rockhill that he had received
several “pressing invitations” from the Chinese to come to Peking, but he stated that
he would select his own time, and would not submit to Chinese dictates in the
matters. According to historical records, nothing came out of this meeting, as the
relation between the US and Tibet ended as abruptly as they had begun and did not
resume for almost four decades. However, the role played by Rockhill is notable, he
was the first American author of an authoritative account of the historical relations
between the Tibetan and Chinese, based on Chinese sources; the account was
destined to become the basis for the official US attitude towards the political status
of Tibet.

In 1904, there were some groups of US citizens, who expressed great interest in
Tibet as mission field, a place of mystery and adventure worthy of study and

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exploration. A missionary Albert L. Shelton came to Tibet in 1904 as a Protestant medical Missionary. He worked among the Chinese and Tibetans and earned high regards from both the sides. In 1916, the Chinese Officials in Batang approached him to negotiate with the Tibetan bandits, using his good relations and language skills. On many occasions, Shelton and his fellow missionaries played the successful role of mediating between the Chinese and Tibetans. However in 1922, the missionary mission was called off, when Shelton was slain by Tibetan bandits, while waiting for the Lhasa permit. After his death, the approach road to Tibet from east was closed in 1922.

Around this time, William M. McGovern, an American author, entered Lhasa in disguise through trans-Himalayan route from southern Tibet. However, his scaling to Tibet was not smooth. The news of his arrival caused a popular riot by pro-Chinese monks, which prompted him to leave Tibet after six weeks. However, he came back to visit Tibet in 1922 and 1923. Based on his experiences in Tibet, he threw some highlight on the political status of Tibet. He stated that, until 1912, Tibet was a "vassal" of China; Tibet was now standing alone and independent. This is the first time that the American visitor raised a view on the political situation inside Tibet.

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Another American who visited Tibet was Suydam Cutting in 1930. He was a naturalist explorer; he became the good friend of the XIII Dalai Lama and even exchanged a gift with him.\textsuperscript{11} After the death of the Dalai Lama (1933), he revisited Tibet in 1935 and 1937. His wife was the first western female to be officially invited to visit Tibet.\textsuperscript{12} The friendship between the XIII Dalai Lama and Cutting was so strong that, on many occasions Cutting played role other than that of scientific observer. According to Thomas, several times, the Dalai Lama conveyed Cutting to play the role of a mediator to build the bridge between Tibet and US.\textsuperscript{13} However, both the Dalai Lama and Cutting knew unofficially that the US government would not recognize Tibet.

Thus, initially, the American relation with Tibet was very limited and was at individual and unofficial level. The US policy makers felt that there was no practical basis for any kind of ties with Tibet. Naturally, she left Tibet to British India and China.

However by 1942, the US expressed its interest on Tibet, when the Axis powers appeared to be converging on middle Asia, the Germans pushing across Africa to Suez, and the Japanese threatening India through Indo-China and Thailand and finally when the legendary road of Burma was closed.\textsuperscript{14} Because, the legendary road, which carried goods to China, was important and isolating off China from any land access to military supplies from its allies was a deep psychological blow. On


\textsuperscript{13} Lawell Thomas Jr., op. cit. p. 26.

such events the US attitude towards Tibet changed and soon brought in the need for a direct relation with Tibet in order to build the supply road via India-Tibet.

In search of new route, the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) captain Ilia Tolstoy secretly carried out the Mission to Tibet and Lieutenant Brooke Dolan presented a gift from US president Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Dalai Lama.\(^\text{15}\) This mission had two-fold purpose: the state department wished to maintain friendly relations with Tibet, whereas the war department of US sought for land supply route.

When the Tibetans sensed the US interest in Tibet, they endorsed Tolstoy for three fully equipped long-range radio transmitters for broadcasting within Tibet. However, reluctantly the OSS director sent radio, believing it to be helpful to the war efforts, which have reached Lhasa in November 1943.\(^\text{16}\) In 1949, December another gift was received (generator). As far as US is concerned the gift of generator is just a simple limited expense and readily available technology, which was insignificant in antagonizing her relations with China. Whereas for Tibetans to whom the electricity had been recently introduced, a generator gift from the US stood to mean of symbolic value which they were looking for. Tolstoy and Dolan also urged the US government to support Tibet vis-à-vis the Chinese government.\(^\text{17}\) However, the Chinese government reassured the American commitment to her suzerainty over Tibet. Because, the same year (1943), the US rejected a British proposal to recognise Tibet's right to exchange diplomatic representative with the

\(^{15}\) Ibid. p. 84.

\(^{16}\) Foreign Relations of the US (FRUS), 1943, p. 624.

other nations.\textsuperscript{18} Despite the Chinese periodic assurances, the US deal with Tibet during the war was as if it were independent and neutral.\textsuperscript{19} It is to be noted that when the US mission sent Tolstoy and Dolan to Tibet, the US obtained permission from Tibetan government and not from the Chinese.

Thus US had an opportunity to recognize Tibet as an independent state, supported by her historical facts. But US policy was to build China into great power for propose of friendly post-war East Asia leadership. Naturally, this disavowed any intention to legitimise Tibet as independent.

After the Second World War, the US interest in Tibet started to trickle down and lose enthusiasm. And US ambassador in Delhi, resolved that, in order to avoid any future conflicts over the issue of Tibetan independence all future correspondence to Lhasa would be addressed to the 'Foreign Bureau' rather than the 'Foreign Office' as the Tibetans called it. As far as China was concerned Tibet did not represent an independent nation.\textsuperscript{20} It is to be noted that the US embassy in New Delhi and the US state department continued to consult Pundit Nehru and his government on most of the American Policy initiatives in Tibet.\textsuperscript{21} Obviously, the American officials or agents saw a common interest between anti-Communist USA and Nationalist India, threatened by PLA take over of Tibet. However, New Delhi's refusal to co-operate with Washington on Tibetan issue was more on ideological grounds than due to any strategic consideration.


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Foreign Office and Legislative Yuan}, FRUS, 1947, p. 771.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. p. 95.
Thus, for 15 years (1957-72) the Tibetan operation became a part of the USA’s national secret and security about which only the president, the CIA directors and the joint chiefs had any knowledge.\textsuperscript{22} The rest including the American public knew almost nothing about it until 1970s when the Sino-American \textit{entente cordiale} began. In 1963, \textit{Motherland}, a Kathmandu based English daily, was closed down for suggesting that something should be done about Khambas in Mustang.\textsuperscript{23} The US had carefully inspected to make doubly sure that all USA markings and labels were removed from their cloth, equipments and medicine bottles, which formed part of supply.\textsuperscript{24}

**Tibetan Trade Mission to USA**

On 25 October 1947, the Tibetan government decided to send trade missions to India, Britain, the US, China and several other countries under the leadership of Tsepon Shakabpa.\textsuperscript{25} According to Shakabpa, Tibetan export items, chiefly wool, musk, fur and yak-tails, were usually sold via India. All the business was negotiated through India, which paid Tibet in rupees. The objective of trade delegation was to seek the relaxation of Indian control on Tibetan exports and to request payment in dollars, pounds and sterling instead of rupees. The delegation was to purchase gold for the banking of Tibetan currency. As the world was not properly informed of Tibetan political status and since what it did know was from the Chinese sources, it was necessary for Tibet to open formal relation with other nations of the world, to demonstrate Tibet’s independent and sovereign status. The main idea behind this

\textsuperscript{22} Tibetan Review, vol. III, no. 16-17, October-November 1973, p. 25

\textsuperscript{23} FRUS, 1952-54), vol. 12, p. 749.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. pp. 267-271.

mission was to establish international recognition of Tibet as an independent country.

However, at the diplomatic level the trade mission did not fare too well. Because on reaching US the delegation decided against the meeting with the US president Harry S. Truman when the conditions was laid down before them that, the Chinese ambassador Wellington Koo would accompany the Tibetan delegation to the white house. So, meeting with the US president was ruled out. But they met secretary of state George C. Marshall without Koo; in the meeting, he endorsed to grant the gold purchase of US$ 750,000.26

The Department of state was aware that the transaction might be considered to be symbolic of a change in US policy towards Tibet. However, her political position did not change, as it asserted that the willingness of the US to sell gold to the Tibetan authorities does not constitute recognition of the Tibetan administration as a sovereign government.27

The Tibetan trade mission to US may have failed at diplomatic level, but the greater success of the mission was the demonstration of Tibetan intention to conduct its own affairs independently. This was especially important for the US, as it had little pervious awareness of Tibetan desire for independence from China. The US state department observer stated that Tibet, according to the leader of the Tibetan trade mission, is completely independent and Chinese government had no control over the internal or external affairs of the country.28

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26 Ibid. p. 91.
27 FRUS, 1949, pp. 1064-78.
In 1947, after the trade mission returned to Tibet, once again Shakabpa, the leader of trade mission, convinced the Kashak to allow radio broadcaster Lowell and his son to visit Lhasa.\textsuperscript{29} Lowell Thomas Jr. stated that they were invited not only because they could publicize the fact but also Tibet feared Communist China and was seeking assurance of protection.\textsuperscript{30} And when Thomas persuaded American officials to make a commitment to defend Tibet, the Chinese depicted him as an imperialist 'interventionist' and 'top special agent,' dispatched from Washington to carry out conspiratorial activities in Tibet.

After this incident in 1950, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) officially declared and accused that Tibet was being infiltrated by foreigners of imperialist interest, that the declaration of 1949 has been inspired by the British and American agents within the area, and that the Tibetans were in fact eager to take the forceful measure to free themselves of these alien influences.\textsuperscript{31} China strongly condemned the infiltration of foreigners and subsequently reaffirmed her advancement in Tibet. Thus Thomas returned to the USA, and news conference was held at the airport itself for American aids against communist China and immediate dispatch of American mission to Lhasa.\textsuperscript{32}

\textbf{The US Relation with Tibet on the eve of PLA Occupation}

With the PLA declaration in 1949, the Tibetan officials sought urgent appeal to Britain, the US and India for military aid. When American diplomat in New Delhi


met Surkhang (Tibetan Official) on 19 November 1949, it was conveyed that America was the "greatest and most powerful country" and Tibet's only hope. The American Ambassador Henderson's response was that the US is sympathetic to the predicament, although it could not publicly demonstrate any concern or involvement. The secret talk between the US and Tibet continued throughout 1950-51, often with George Patterson acting as Liaison. However in 1949, under the leadership of president Truman, US made the decision that it would no longer participate in Chinese civil war; on 5 January 1950, the US president reaffirmed that US government would not pursue a course that would lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China.

The US interest in Tibet was not entirely based on a strong commitment to Tibetan independence. When the PLA entered Tibet, the US showed little interest even as a way to fight Communist expansion in Asia. The very notion of an independent Tibet was consciously absent in many documents that are available from this period. Rather, the US saw Tibet as just another tool in an anti-Communist Crusade, designed to pressurise China and topple the communist government.

Subsequently, on 24 November 1950, the Tibet appealed to United Nations (UN) summit at El Salvador. The US in this summit urged India to vote in support of Tibet, promising that the US would follow suit. However, this scheme could not materialize. So the issue of Tibet was dropped. The British representative termed Tibetan status ambiguous; the Americans said it was largely an Indian concern. The

33 FRUS, 1949, pp. 1980-82.
Soviet Union condemned UN intervention in China's internal matters, while the India voiced their hope for a peaceful resolution. Finally, UN failure to acknowledge the Tibetan plight helped the PLA introduce the 17 points agreement, which was born on 1951.

**US Response to Seventeen Points Agreement**

The US responses to seventeen points agreement was guided and shaped by her geopolitical interest by way of fighting the communist expansion. Secondly, it maintained a balanced relation with Republican China on Taiwan, which also came into play in the process. After the signing of 17 points agreement, the quick decision of the US was to persuade the Dalai Lama, who was at Yatung by that time, to repudiate the agreement and advised him not to return to Tibet.

The US ambassador in New Delhi, Loy Henderson, undertook a diplomatic level initiative after a meeting with Heinrich Harrer who informed him that the Dalai Lama is sceptical about his returning to Tibet, even though a few monks insist him to come to terms with the Beijing. In deed, the Dalai Lama was confused whether to accept or reject an agreement with China and also uncertain whether India would give him an asylum. The US ambassador sent secret message to the Dalai Lama at Yatung in plain paper without any formal authorization from the American government.

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37 Ibid. p. 5.
40 Tsering Shakya, 1999, p. 72.
Following were the US Ambassador's suggestions to the Dalai Lama after 17 points agreement:

1. The communist regime is determined to obtain complete control through tricks rather than through force. They are anxious to persuade his holiness (HH) to make an arrangement, which would allow them to establish a representative in Lhasa.

2. The establishment of representative of the communist regime in Lhasa would serve only to speed up seize of all Tibet by the Chinese communists.

3. Until changes in the world situation would make it difficult for the Communist China to take over Tibet, H. H. should under no circumstances return to Lhasa or send his own treasures or those of Tibet back to Lhasa.

4. H. H. should not return to Lhasa while the danger exists that by force or tricks the Chinese communists might seize Lhasa. He should leave Yatung for some foreign country if it should look like the Chinese Communists might try to prevent his escape.

5. It is suggested that H. H. sends representatives at once to Ceylon.

6. If H. H. and his household could not find safe asylum in Ceylon he could be certain of finding a place of refugee in the friendly countries including US, in the Western Hemisphere.

7. It might also be useful for the H. H. immediately to send a mission to the US where it would prepare a direct appeal to the UN. It is understood that H. H. is already aware that favourable consideration will be granted to the application made by the members of the Tibetan mission to the UN for US visa.41

However, this message was unsigned and written on ordinary paper purchased from India, which bore no indication of its origin.42 Although American support was encouraging, the Tibetans were uncertain about how they should react or how committed the Americans were in their support whereas the American were

clearly anxious to receive an affirmative answer from the Dalai Lama that he would disavow the agreement and leave Tibet. But there was no clear indication that Dalai Lama had formally or publicly repudiated the 17 points agreement. So, the US sent another letter after two months stating that since sending the previous letter they have read in the Newspapers that His delegation to Peking signed an agreement with the Chinese Communists. The letter continued thus: We do not believe they signed it with your permission but were forced to do so. However, the world is beginning to think that you do not object to the agreement because you have made no statement about it. We think you should make this statement soon because the Chinese communists are sending delegation to Yatung through India. If you make no a statement, we think that Tibetan autonomy is gone forever.43 But the Dalai Lama and Kashak were unable to make up their mind because refutation of the agreement and exile seemed to be more capitulatory than acceptance.44

More over, the Dalai Lama and Kashak were uncertain on the following counts:

1. Whether government of India would allow the Dalai Lama to (go through) India en route to US.
2. Whether US aid would be restricted to assist only the Dalai Lama's fleet or whether the material aid might also meet the forthcoming assistance.
3. The US aid would be given 'openly' or 'surreptitiously.'
4. Whether US government would give any assistance if Tibetan government should announce its independence and repudiate Sino-Tibetan Agreement.
5. If the Dalai Lama should go to USA, He would be received or not.45

45 Tsering Shakya, 1999, p. 78.
The fourth question was extremely disturbing as the US was alarmed. Shakabpa argued that five per cent of Tibetan officials had no understanding of the implication of the situation faced by the Tibetan government. Those who urged the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet were unable to persuade the Dalai Lama to act. Warren W. Smith remarked that conservatism and lack of political sophistication of most of the Tibetan officials, as well as their confidence that they would deal with the Communist unknown outside world, were also important factors of concern. And moreover, if the Dalai Lama were in position to show that there was real commitment from the US to support Tibet, and the message confirmed as oath on the signed letter, then they would have been in a position to convince a large section of the common officials. A letter without bearing signature created confusion and scepticism about the US initiative on Tibetan self-determination. On the other hand, the US also had their share of doubts about Tibetan officials. Because, the Tibetans raised the question whether the US government would support if Tibet accepted Sino-Tibet agreement. And also, the Dalai Lama’s return to Lhasa was equivalent to acceptance of agreement.

It is also noted that when Jingwu and party came to Kalimpong on 1 July 1951, the Tibetans lined both sides of the road carrying the Chinese flags, without slightest hint of opposition. The only opposition the Chinese felt was a speech given by Tharchein, who stated that according to Tibetan proverb everything changes like a wheel. It continued: Just the other day, there was a different kind of picture on the wall, but now Chiang Kai-shek’s picture is replaced. So likewise today Chinese has claimed Tibet and she is under China. But it too will change and once again Tibet

46 Ibid. p. 88.
will enjoy its original freedom. No scenes of opposition in Kalimpong streets on the arrival of Chinese party leader and failure of Kashak to persuade the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet were blamed on the unreliable intermediaries or the lack of political acumen of the Tibetan officials who did not understand American officials. However, the Tibetan officials were sceptical and unimpressed by the unsigned letters.

However, US had a fear that the letters might fall into Chinese hands and be used to demonstrate American interference in Chinese affairs. And another concern was if Tibetans were pushed further in the negotiations with Communist China, the Tibetans might use such documents to reinforce their position.

The Dalai Lama remarked that US was not interested in Tibetan independence, but only in Tibetan resistance against the Communism. Warren Smith states that the US patronage briefly appeared to offer some hope to the Tibetans and was based on her vested interest in opposing Soviet and Chinese Communism. The US however accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and was reluctant to support Tibetan independence against the Chinese because of her (US) relation with (China) Taiwan that continued to claim authority over Tibet. Therefore, the US support was crafted for Tibetan autonomy, and not independence, and this clearly indicates limits of US support.

CIA interventions in the Tibetan Protest Movement

Towards early 1956, the Americans refocused on the Tibetan protest movement, when the PLA implemented the democratic reform in eastern Tibet. After the Chinese consolidation of her position in Tibet (1950), the US approached the Dalai Lama through the state department (US embassy in Delhi and Calcutta consulate). But after the 17 points agreement (1951) the Tibet issue was handed over from the state department to CIA, thus CIA began its clandestine operation, since Tibet became part of China.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) revived its interest in 1956, when Tibet was in unrest, because of her religious, social and political fervency and her economy was hit hard. As a result, when the mass Kanting rebellion broke out in eastern Tibet and subsequent events followed, the CIA intervened with the US interests of jeopardizing the communist hegemony in Asia.

According to Director of CIA, Allen Dulles, the situation offered an ideal opportunity for the CIA; the agency provided clandestine assistance to the Tibetan rebels to harass the Chinese.\(^53\) Thus, the CIA involvement began in the 1950s by recruiting Tibetans in Darjeeling and Kalimpong in late 1955 or early 1956.\(^54\) According to Wangdu (one of the rebel), he left Tibet in 1956 and was trained by the Americans somewhere overseas and after the training they were secretly dropped back into Tibet, in Kham region, where they organized rebellions until his departure for Nepal in 1966.\(^55\)


Tom A Grunfeld stated that Gyalo Thandup was the person who organised the first CIA training mission, where six persons were recruited for training and in 1957 they were parachuted back to Tibet by the American pilot, carried pistol, machine gun, radio, US $ 132 in Tibetan currency and two small vials of poison to swallow if captured.\textsuperscript{56}

Among these six trained persons, three persons were dropped at Lithang where two persons were killed, and two persons dropped at Samye landed safely, where they contacted the Dalai Lama's minister, Phala and conveyed the US offer to help the Tibetans, if only they receive authentic request from the Tibetan government.\textsuperscript{57} However, they failed to convince the chamberlain (Phala) that the US did not want to appear to be aiding Khambas.

But in 1958, for the first time an attempt was made to drop arms to Khambas in Kham, the land of four rivers and six ranges, the home of Tibetan traditional warriors, whose frequent attack on Chinese made her build the great wall of China and whose courage and determination saved Tibet from Chengiz Khan's invasion. With the Communist Chinese invasion now, Khambas were the first to take up arms and challenge the biggest army on the earth. The Khambas mobilised revolts in various parts of Kham. They declared: "The time has now arrived ... to unite in the common struggle against the Chinese." This was the beginning of the organised Tibetan protest movement under Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang in Kham.\textsuperscript{58} In Kham, the Khambas received shipment from the CIA in 1958, contents of which were 100 British made rifles, 20 submachine guns, two 55 mm mortars, 60 hand grenades and

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. p. 159.


300 rounds of ammunition for each weapon. Another airdrop was made in between October 1958 and February 1959 by Civil Air Transport (CAT), one of the CIA’s airlines, which dropped almost ten tons of weapons and supplies to the rebels.

In 1958, the CIA decided to shift the training ground from Taiwan to Saipon and finally to Camp Hale, Colorado Rocky Mountain (US), a setting which seemed more promising as an approximation to Tibetan Climate and altitude than the semitropical Taiwan. About one hundred seventy Khambas received Combat training in remote Camp Hale, under the instruction of world war marine veteran and legendary guerrilla instructor Anthony Poe. However, the CIA took the measure to maintain the secrecy of anti-Chinese training in USA. Therefore in 1961, Défence Department pleaded with the New York Times to refrain from publishing the story claiming that it might raise the tension with Peking to dangerous levels. So finally, the training of the anti-Chinese from US land came to an end and was shifted to Nepal (Mustang). The Chinese were aware of CIA activities; the Foreign office of the PRC (1-7-1998) reported that, “US and Kai-shek Clique” was increasing its collusion with Tibetan reactionaries in Kalimpong and they were actively inciting and organising handful of reactionaries hidden in Tibet for an

armed revolt there in order to attain the treacherous aim of separating the Tibetan region from China.  

However, China failed to understand the ground reality of CIA support before it nearly approached the level necessary to sustain real drive for Tibetan independence, as Hall remarked. The first arms drop in 1958 was made only when the Khambas repeatedly appealed for help and after shifting the training ground from Colorado to Mustang (Nepal), and the Khambas were near starvation.

The account of the CIA’s hand in the Dalai Lama’s escape and escorting seems to be mostly the result of creative journalistic imagination, according to Jamyang Norbu. Because, the only agents of the CIA in Lhasa to connect with the Dalai Lama and the Kashak were Atha and Lhotse, who were parachuted just before the revolt in Lhasa in order to convince the Kashak about US help, though they failed in their mission. But we cannot deny the CIA involvement in aiding Khambas as early as 1958 and subsequently launching training to Khambas. It is noted that during the Dalai Lama’s escape to India, Khambas who had been trained and equipped with movie camera and sufficient colour films to preserve a usual record of the flight accompanied him. A Lockheed CIA aircraft was especially modified for flight over the thin air of Tibet to drop food and other stuff for the Dalai Lama’s party. The radio operator also joined up with the Dalai Lama’s

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67 Ibid. p. 95.
entourage about half way to India and from that point on was in constant radio communication with the CIA station in Dhaka.  

Richard Bissell, the former head of clandestine operation for the CIA, believed that the Dalai Lama could not have made his escape without the CIA trained operators who accompanied him. The Dalai Lama also confirmed the constant activity of the Khambas "who came and went, keeping in touch with all isolated bands who were living in the mountains." As for Khambas, it was a historic and surprise meeting in the circumstances and they ceremoniously exchanged white scarves with God·king. It was like an exchange full of unspoken significance for the rebels, as it was in a way a formal reception of their prize. The God King was now at last under their full control. Michel Peissel remarked that the circumstances now called for a complete reappraisal of the Dalai Lama’s policies. He was a stubborn young man, but he began to relate his opinion on the Khambas now that for the first time he saw the faces clearly and stern features of those arrogant warriors, their long hair blowing in the wind as they rode beside him. At every stop he was able to further his acquaintance with these so-called wild cavaliers, the defenders of the faith, the soldiers of the fortress of religion of which he was head. Finally the Dalai Lama reached India safely in 1959.

According to Marchett and Marks, the CIA found another opportunity in 1959 to engage in special operations when Tibet revolted against the Chinese who have imposed their rule eight years back on Tibet. Sparked by Peking’s move to

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71 Tom A. Grunfeld, 1996, p. 156.
replace the Dalai Lama, Tibetan traditional religious and temporal ruler, with the Panchen Lama, an important religious leader controlled by the Chinese, there was a short-lived uprising. After its failure, the Dalai Lama with several thousand followers and troops escaped to India, where he and his loyalists were granted sanctuary in India.73

Indeed CIA supply and trained troops have played some crucial role in Tibetan revolt against the Chinese hegemony as well as the Dalai Lama’s flight to India in 1959.

However, by the late 1960s the CIA clandestine operations were interested only in seeking graceful way to terminate their association with the Dalai Lama.74 The Tibetan operation was soon overshadowed and succeeded by CIA involvement in Congo, Vietnam and Laos, which drained CIA resources, and thus efforts on this area began to wane.75 The US President Eisenhower ordered an abrupt halt to all the clandestine operations including those in Tibet.

The US President, John F. Kennedy also made an attempt to shift all major clandestine operations under the direct supervision of the Joint Chief of Staff (JCS), in order to end or moderate CIA operations in Tibet and other part of the world. Since then, there was no direct CIA support but only sporadic material and financial support, provided until 1972.

In 1971, the state department had revised its unofficial involvement in Tibet. As the old policy does not suit the new policy of Sino-American detente policy, there was no space for hostile operation. The hostile policy was replaced by

74 Ibid. p. 117.
rapprochement. Therefore, all the CIA aid to the Tibetan rebels was halted just before President Nixon's trip to China in 1972.\(^{76}\) It is remarkable that US had suppressed the anti-Chinese documentary film, which depicted the Chinese hegemony over Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama from Lhasa, "man from the missing land" as piece of sabotage. In order to avoid jeopardizing the upcoming US president trip to China, the film remained unreleased as a sad remnant of the cold war in Tibet.\(^{77}\)

With the end of the US involvement in Tibet, the Chinese filled the vacuum without losing time. In 1973, Mao Zedong told the Nepali King Birendra that Khambas were the major obstacle to Sino-Nepal relation. As such in March 1974, the Khamba ringleaders were arrested and ultimatum was given until July to surrender or face the consequences.\(^{78}\) When Khambas refused to surrender in 1974, the Gurkha Troops were called back from United Nations (UN) mission and major operation was launched to eliminate the Tibetan guerrillas. In order to avoid bloodshed, the Dalai Lama intervened and urged the Khambas to give up their arms. By 1975, most of them surrendered. But Wangdu and some of his men did not and attempted to escape; on reaching Nepal-India frontier, Wangdu and four persons were slain by Nepalis and remaining of them surrendered. The Royal Nepal army then began clean-up operations.\(^{79}\) The final tragic act was shown in 1979, when seven of Tibetan guerrillas, who were arrested in 1974, were sentenced for life imprisonment on the ground of jeopardizing the sovereignty of Nepal.

\(^{76}\) Norman C. Hall, in *Tibetan Review*, vol. XIII, no. 1, January 1978.


Warren Smith stated that at the coast of Tibetan resistance, the king Birendra of Nepal developed good relation with China and earned Chinese economic assistance.\textsuperscript{80}

The comparative study of US involvement in Tibet of the pre-1972 period (cold war phase) and the post-cold war phase showed that the former period remained relatively clandestine. The CIA cannot now control the course of American policy towards Tibet. From the confines of the CIA, the issue of Tibet has now been taken to the public arena where it is advocated and contested, debated and discussed as never before.

Dawa Norbu maintained that there is revolution in American public consciousness regarding Tibet. Although there is resistance from the state department, there is public pressure to put Tibet on the American foreign policy agenda. The American public began to take increasing interest in Tibet for a wide variety of reasons ranging from the utopia of “Shangri-la” to “new” sense of propose and meaning in life under Buddhism the youth who resorted to drugs after the post-traumatic disorder caused by the Vietnam war. A positive impact of Tibetan culture in American society is phenomenal: today there are about 217 Tibetan Buddhist meditation centres spread across America.

The two events in 1989 transformed this cultural interest into a political passion. The brutal suppression of the Tiananmen Square pro-independence demonstrators unleashed waves of hate against Chinese communist authorities. The award of the Nobel Prize to the Dalai Lama and the Dalai Lama’s all-round interest in panhuman concerns followed this.

\textsuperscript{80} Warren W. Smith Jr., 1996, p. 509.
According to Dawa Norbu, the Dalai Lama’s strategy in America has been to focus on its mass media and Hollywood stars, as a means of mobilizing of American public opinion in Tibet's favour. Because, the USA being a mature democracy, public concerns at the grassroots level get reflected in congress. The congress, in turn, pressurises the presidency and the state department to change its policy. There is compulsion for congress to act, since congressmen owe election to office to their respective constituencies across the nation, and must think about the next election. They are responsive to popular concerns and the public mood.81

Between 1987 and October 1992, the US congress passed eight resolutions and is significant from the perspective of American overall Tibet strategy, although American public shows more interest on involvement in Tibet from the notions of Shangri-la myth and Lama mediation. The CIA maintained its operations secret from public view and it indicated the hidden agenda. American involvement in Tibet cannot be equated with that of Vietnam, as that is beyond compare in terms of manpower and secrecy. When the first group of Khambas arrived at Camp Hale (Colorado) in July 1959, a cover story was put out: atomic tests more to be conducted at the reopened bore.82 The area was declared out of bounds, and military guards were given shoot orders to kill any unauthorized person trespassing. A similar incident took place there in 1960. A convoy of Tibetan trainees from the camp were deployed in reaching a nearby airfield by deep snow. When they arrived at the airport after dawn, the airfield employees observed the strange looking Khambas. To preserve the secrecy of the operation, US soldiers held forty-seven

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American citizens at gunpoint in the name of a dubious national security, and told them it would be a federal offence to talk about it. 83

After Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s, the concerned American elite’s consensus seemed to have encouraged a dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the Beijing for a negotiated settlement on Tibet. However, while the congressional support for Tibet has been overwhelming, it would be misleading to suggest some sort of unanimity on the part of presidency and the state department. In fact, the executive branch has been rather critical of congress’ pro-Tibet stand. The Reagan administration has refused to join the congressional attacks on Chinese policies and practices in Tibet. One state department official described the senate amendment of December 1987 as “inaccurate, incomplete and misleading.” 84 J. Stapleton Roy, the then Deputy Assistant Secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, criticized the Dalai Lama’s political activities during his 1987 visit. He warned that adopting the Dalai Lama’s peace proposal would be “contrary to US Policy” and would constitute “interference in the internal affairs of another country.” 85 To retaliate against strong criticism unleashed by the June 1987 legislation, Beijing invited former President Jimmy Carter and his wife on a two-day visit to Lhasa. And if the Beijing Review quoted him correctly, President Carter was: “pleased to see the freedom of religion and freedom of worship are flourishing” in Tibet. He also commented that if the members of congress had seen such conditions, they might have had a “different view on the amendments.” 86

83 Ibid. p. 271.
Thus while both the legislature and executive branches share similar concerns on human rights abuses in Tibet, they differ considerably on the political question of Tibet. Seeing such resistance from the state department, congress has adopted a clear strategy. Most of the radical statements supporting Tibet, such as the one made in 1991, 1994 and 1995, were pushed through by the congress as amendments to budget bills whose passage depended on congress approval. Thus, congress commitment to the Tibetan course appears to be fairly deep and consistent, indeed as the American public desires it to be. But the state department represents the state power structure and has been pursuing state and Big Business interests in relation to China. In such cold calculations, political and economic interests are paramount and human-interest issues like Tibet become peripheral.\textsuperscript{87}

While investigating the Tibet factors in USA-PRC relations, Tibet is seen caught in the struggle either by choice or without, but is nevertheless impacted by it. The only visible part of CIA involvement was the humanitarian assistance given to Tibetan refugees in the late 1950s and 1960s. It also worked behind the scenes to raise the Tibetan question at the UN in 1950, 1959, 1961 and 1965.\textsuperscript{88} During the Sino-American detente (1969-86) the Tibet issue was put to freeze: the guerrillas based in Mustang was disarmed in 1974; the USIA produced a film on Tibet ("The men from the missing land") and was banned under Kissinger's order; the Dalai Lama was denied American visa in 1975. And according to one Chinese scholar, in 1978 the US government stated for the first time that Tibet was part of the PRC.\textsuperscript{89} But according to the interpretation of one of the Dalai Lama's representative in New

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid. p. 277.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. p. 278
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. p. 279.
York the US government neither recognises nor derecognises Tibet as a part of the PRC.\textsuperscript{90}

Apparently from 1987 onwards the US policy has given way to relative transparency. For instance, congress resolutions, public law and human rights discourse, and pressure on the PRC to resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Like the changing policies and practices over time, the US legal position on the international status of Tibet have undergone a sea of change from time to time. Seeing from a total perspective, the factors that would underline the future course of US policy towards Tibet would be apparently not only international relation alone but economy and political consequence to the American people.

\textbf{How far the Role of CIA is Significant in the Tibetan Protest Movement?}

The role played by CIA during the protest movement in Tibet is not significant. Had it begun in a large scale during 1956 or 1959 at the time of mass revolts, which broke out when the Tibetan's religion, socio-political culture and economy was hit hard. Or had they whole-heartedly involved at the official level from the very beginning and had had a strong commitment like that with Taiwan, which had diplomatic relation, mutual defence treaty, and stationed US troops, it would have helped Tibet.

But US interest on Tibet was based on geo-political strategy of countering the communists in Asia. Thus Tibet was treated as pawn, in order to make Tibet into pawn, the US used CIA in many occasions.

After the Dalai Lama left Tibet (1959), the US mobilized the issue of Tibet at international level by depicting the Chinese aggressiveness. And it also exposed the Chinese cruel embrace on Tibetan human rights and self-determination. Through her

\textsuperscript{90} Chris Mullin, op. cit. p. 34.
support, the UN granted 1959, 1961 and 1962 resolutions, which condemned the Chinese iron hand over Tibet.

In 1970s, the US policy of destabilizing isolating and weakening the PRC was abandoned and the US promoted China to join new world order with the intention of creating the balance of power against the Soviet Union. Therefore, just before the President Nixon’s trip to China, documentary film on the Dalai Lama’s escape was shelved. By 1972, CIA support of Tibetan rebels in Mustang came to an end after Kissinger’s first visit to China in 1971. The CIA involvement in Tibet is only to serve her purpose to suppress the spread of communist hegemony in Asia. In the process the Tibet fitted her scheme, when the revolt broke out after the introduction of ‘democratic reforms.’ The Tibet was used as pawn, and at the end, the Tibetans had to pay the prize of false hopes given for many years, if not the generations to come.\(^91\)

\(^{91}\) A. Tom Grunfeld, 1996, p. 165.