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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: BACKGROUND PAPER ON THE SITUATION OF THE TIBETAN POPULATION

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**commissioned by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
Protection Information Section (DIP)**

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Acronyms

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
TGIE	Tibetan Government in Exile
TIN	Tibet Information Network
TPAF	Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US(A)	United States (of America)

Executive Summary

Tibet is currently a highly controversial topic, mainly because of disagreement over whether it should belong to China and because Chinese authorities stand accused of human rights abuses there.

Tibetan culture and history have a strong identity, dominated by Tibetan Buddhism. China's Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911) took over Tibet in 1720. In 1913, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama declared Tibetan independence, but successive Chinese governments continued to regard Tibet as part of China. The historical record is mixed over whether Tibet is part of China, but does show China with a sustainable claim.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) sent troops into Tibet in 1950 and reached an agreement with the Lhasa government in May 1951 under which Tibet would be part of China. A major revolt in 1959 was suppressed but saw the Dalai Lama escape to India. Protest demonstrations for independence occurred from 1987 to 1989. In March 1989, the authorities imposed martial law in the capital Lhasa, lifting it in May 1990.

The policy resulting from the demonstrations emphasized economic development and zero tolerance for separatism. From Beijing's viewpoint, this policy has proved successful, with fewer independence demonstrations since 1990. The economy has expanded and the standard of living risen. On the other hand, there is still grinding poverty in Tibetan areas, especially in the countryside, and ethnic and regional inequalities remain severe.

Tibetan Buddhism is openly practised and most houses have prayer rooms. The monasteries are flourishing, with no shortage of boys wishing to join. However, there are also severe restrictions on religion and in 1996 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduced a ban on public display of pictures of the Dalai Lama. In 1995 a political controversy erupted between the Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama over the choice of the Eleventh Panchen Lama, the Chinese choice prevailing.

The claim of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGIE) that deaths due to Chinese occupation exceed 1.2 million is contested. The Tibetan population has been growing significantly since the 1960s, reaching nearly 5.5 million in 2000. There has been considerable Han Chinese immigration to Lhasa, especially since the 1990s. However, the Dalai Lama's claim that Chinese immigration to Tibet is a major factor contributing to "cultural genocide" is disputed.

Allegations of serious human rights abuses and torture of detainees are credible. Chinese laws are generally reasonable, but the legal system is not nearly strong enough to withstand pressures from the CCP-dominated state, which is obsessed by fears of political instability and national fragmentation. Groups most at risk are political dissidents, especially Buddhist monks and nuns. Non-Governmental and Inter-Governmental organizations (NGOs and IGOs) have played an active and generally positive role through their humanitarian and development aid in Tibet, even though they have frequently come under attack from Tibet lobbyists on the grounds that, in effect, they assist the Chinese government. The trends in human rights show improvements in some ways since 2000, with the situation since late 2004 unclear.

Tibet is under firmer political, economic and social control from China than ever before and is highly unlikely to secede over the next decade.

1 Introduction

Tibet once had the reputation of a Shangri-La, a kind of exotic paradise with stunning scenery in very high-lying territory and remote from the world.¹ To some extent, it still has such an image. However, in contemporary times, it is also a region subject to intense controversy, arousing strong emotions.

There are several reasons for this, but three stand out as most important. The first and main one is that many people consider Tibet should be a fully independent nation-state, including most among the Tibetan diaspora and a significant proportion of Tibetans within China. One of the features of contemporary international discourse is profound concern for the independence and fate of ethnic groups, especially those with small populations that are considered to be oppressed and to have suffered injustice. Proponents of an independent Tibet regard China as having invaded and suppressed this country, which though small in population is historically important and has a profound culture totally different from China's. On the other hand, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) regards Tibet as an integral part of China and opposes independence with all its might. It claims there are good historical and other reasons for regarding Tibet as part of China. Like many other states, it is highly suspicious of separatist movements, fearing that they will lead to the fragmentation of the larger state. The PRC maintains that Tibetan culture is only one of the many that combine to make up Chinese culture.

The second main reason why Tibet is so controversial is that the Chinese authorities there stand accused of perpetrating major human rights abuses. These include persecution of religion, suppression of culture, and even genocide. The Tibetan diaspora and many human rights activists claim that Chinese occupation has led to the deaths of many Tibetans through violence, starvation and poverty. They allege that Han Chinese have taken over Tibet, in part by swamping Tibetan territories with Han Chinese immigrants, making the Tibetans a minority in their own country.

On the other hand, the Chinese claim to have developed Tibet into a modern territory, to have vastly improved the livelihood of the Tibetans, and to have wiped out appalling injustices perpetrated by the Tibetan rulers against their own people, while preserving what is good in Tibetan culture and maintaining a form of religious freedom. The Chinese authorities claim that the size of the Tibetan population has grown under the PRC, and categorically reject accusations of cultural, or any other kind of genocide. Accounts of Tibet by official sources from the PRC and those from the Tibetan diaspora or human rights activists are so different that they appear to be dealing with two totally different places.

The third reason why Tibet arouses such controversy is related to the first two. It is the role it plays in international relations, especially relations between China and the United States. Although the United States has generally recognized Tibet as part of China, it has been severely critical of China's behaviour in Tibet. The Tibet issue has also had a very severe impact on China's relations with India. This is because, to China's intense annoyance, India has given refuge to the Tibetan spiritual leader the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and to a significant

¹ See the discussion in Schell, O., *Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood*, New York: Henry Holt, 2000, especially pp. 15-30

Tibetan diaspora. There are major Tibetan communities in India, especially in Dharamsala in northwestern India, which is home to a Tibetan government-in-exile (TGIE).

The present background paper aims to analyze the situation in Tibet and the Tibetan regions of China. The focus is the region once ruled by the Dalai lamas, which is now the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), often described in the scholarly literature as “political Tibet”. However, there are also references to the Tibetan communities in what was once northern Tibet, known to the Tibetans as Amdo, and eastern Tibet, called Kham. These are currently the ethnic Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in China, sometimes described as “ethnographic Tibet”.² The Tibetan diaspora will be considered only insofar as it affects Tibetans in China itself. The paper will include focus on matters relating to human rights, but attempt a balanced picture between various types of sources. It will include some material from the author’s four visits to the TAR in 1985, 1990, 1997 and 2002, as well as visits to Tibetan communities in all four Chinese provinces listed earlier in this paragraph.

The period covered is contemporary. That means that the focus is on the period since the 1990s. However, the Tibetans are possibly even more influenced by their history than other peoples, the implication of which is that it is not sensible to ignore the more distant past altogether.

1.1 Historical Background

Tibet’s independent kingdom reached its acme in the seventh century under the great king Songtsen Gampo (reigned *c.* 627-649). This was also the period when relations with China were first clearly established through Songtsen Gampo’s marriage to a Chinese princess. Buddhism, which was to become the most salient hallmark of Tibetan culture, was introduced into Tibet in the seventh century, with the first monastery being set up shortly after the great Buddhist master Padmasambhava went from India to Tibet in 779. The Mongols conquered both China and Tibet in the thirteenth century, and for the first time both China and Tibet were under a single government. When the Mongol Yuan dynasty fell in China, the succeeding Ming dynasty (1368-1644) “exerted no administrative authority” in Tibet.³

In the late fourteenth century, the great monk Tsongkapa (1357-1419) founded the Gelukpa Order of Buddhism, often called the Yellow Hat Sect, because Tsongkapa’s followers wear yellow hats. This has become the dominant form. The early fifteenth century saw the establishment of three great monasteries of the Gelukpa Order in the Lhasa area, the earliest being the Ganden, which Tsongkapa himself established in 1409, and the largest the Drepung (1416); while in 1445 Gendundrup (1391-1475), who was later retrospectively revered as the First Dalai Lama, set up the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, which other than Lhasa is Tibet’s main city. In 1578, the Mongol Altan Khan conferred the title *dalai* (meaning “ocean” and implying vast wisdom) on Sonam Gyatso, later regarded as the Third Dalai Lama. The theocratic system, whereby the Dalai lamas held both political and religious power, reached

² See Goldstein, M.C., Introduction, in Goldstein, M.C. and Kapstein, M.T. (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 4. Goldstein frequently uses the convenient and sensible terms “political” and “ethnographic” Tibet and other scholars have followed him. He acknowledges that the terms derive from the work of Hugh Richardson.

³ Goldstein, M.C., *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 4

its height with the great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) and then declined, but did not die until the middle of the twentieth century.⁴

The last imperial dynasty in China was the Qing (1644-1911), dominated by the Manchu people. In 1720, Manchu troops took over Tibet. The original aim was to calm a tumultuous political situation, but in fact, the Manchus stayed on in Tibet until their dynasty's collapse. They regarded Tibet as part of their empire and established a system by which resident officials answerable to the Qing dynasty stayed in the Tibetan capital. However, the Tibetans retained a great deal of autonomy, including their own officials and legal system, and the Qing made no attempt to establish Tibet as a Chinese province.⁵

One major action of the Qing dynasty in Tibet was the appointment of the Second Panchen Lama as sovereign of part of Tibet in 1728. The title *panchen* is an abbreviation of a term meaning "great scholar". The Panchen lamas held – and still hold – their seat in the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse and have been traditionally regarded as temporal and spiritually dominant in that region, but subordinate to the Dalai lamas. Nevertheless, down to the present, the Panchen lamas have the reputation of being far more pro-Chinese than the Dalai lamas.

In 1912, the Republic of China replaced the Qing dynasty. Following the principle of inheritance, it regarded those territories that had made up the Qing Empire, including Tibet, as belonging to China, and this remained the view of succeeding Chinese administrations. The most important of the Chinese regimes of the period from 1912 to the establishment of the PRC in 1949 was Chiang Kai-shek's National Government dominated by the Nationalist Party. In March 1929, the Third Nationalist Party Congress formally declared Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang to be part of the Chinese nation, not merely part of the Republic of China. The month before, Chiang Kai-shek's government had set up the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, clearly signalling its view that Tibet (and Mongolia) belonged to China.⁶

The Tibetans held a different view. They resisted Chinese military attempts to suppress disorder in Tibet in 1912. In February 1913, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama formally declared the independence of Tibet in Lhasa and the same year expelled all Manchu and Chinese officials and troops from Tibet. In the words of one scholar, these acts "created a de-facto independent Tibet that maintained its own army and government, used its own language and currency and regulated movement across its borders".⁷ Although the Chinese had no control over central Tibet, both the Tibetan areas in the east (Kham) and in the north (Amdo) remained clearly part of China.

⁴ For an excellent study of the period of the Dalai lamas and their theocratic power see Snellgrove, D. and Richardson, H., *A Cultural History of Tibet*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968, Part 3. The premier work on the late years of the theocracy is Goldstein, M.C. with Rimpoche, G., *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989

⁵ See the discussion in Snellgrove and Richardson, pp. 217-30

⁶ See Mackerras, C., *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 58, 62

⁷ Goldstein, M.C., On Modern Tibetan History: Moving Beyond Stereotypes, in McKay, A. (ed.), *Tibet and Her Neighbours: A History*, London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2003, p. 217

Meanwhile, Britain, with its control in India, had become strongly involved in Tibetan affairs, sending troops into Tibet under Francis Younghusband in 1904. From October 1913 to July 1914, Britain sponsored a major conference in Simla in north India, aiming mainly to determine the status of Tibet and to mark out the borders between India and Tibet. Under the resulting Simla Convention, the extent of Tibetan autonomy expanded with significant British protection, while Chinese influence was “effectively forced out of the area”.⁸ Considering that the Simla Convention marginalized China, it is not surprising that no Chinese government has ever signed it.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power on 1 October 1949, after winning a civil war against Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party, and established the PRC. The CCP’s policy on ethnic minorities was to ban discrimination and lay down equality, as well as the freedom to use local ethnic languages and to preserve or reform traditional cultures.⁹ The CCP allowed a limited autonomy to ethnic minorities by setting up autonomous regions (at province level), and prefectures, counties and banners (at lower levels).

Right from the start, the CCP was very clear that it regarded Tibet as part of China’s territory. In a speech of 24 September, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Commander-in-Chief Zhu De announced that the new government was determined to complete “the liberation of all the territory of China”, and he specifically included Tibet. In January, the Chinese media reported an appeal from the Tenth Panchen Lama in Qinghai Province to liberate Tibet.¹⁰ February 1940 had seen the formal enthronement in Lhasa of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama who, born on 6 July 1935, was still a very small boy. As of 2005, he remains the present incarnation. Late in 1950, the PLA advanced towards Tibet, taking Chamdo in the east in October after a fierce week-long battle. It advanced west, meeting little resistance, but did not move to occupy Lhasa for the time being. The Lhasa regime appealed to the United Nations for help against Chinese aggression. However, for various reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper, the international community did nothing. Meanwhile, Sino-Tibetan negotiations had begun, the Tibetan delegation led by aristocrat and Tibetan cabinet member Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the Chinese by Li Weihan.¹¹ The result was the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 23 May 1951.

The Preamble of this Agreement opened with the statement that “the Tibetan nationality is one of the nationalities with a long history within the boundaries of China”. The seventeen points included that “the Tibet people shall return to the big family of the Motherland – the People’s Republic of China” and that the Tibet government would actively assist the PLA to enter Tibet and consolidate national defence. It also promised the people of Tibet “the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the leadership of the Central People’s Government”. Under Point 4, the central government promised that it would “not alter the

⁸ Grunfeld, A.T., *The Making of Modern Tibet*, Rev. ed., Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. 69. On British relations with Tibet at this time see also Palace, W., *The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2004

⁹ See relevant articles in the 1954 Constitution in People’s Republic of China, *Constitution of the People's Republic of China [1954]*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press 1961, p. 9

¹⁰ Cited in Shakya, T., *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947*, London: Pimlico, 1999, pp. 3, 36

¹¹ On the negotiations in Beijing see especially Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet...*, pp. 759-72

existing political system in Tibet” or “the established status, functions, and powers of the Dalai Lama”.¹² Chinese troops did not occupy Lhasa until the Agreement was signed.

The Chinese justified their attack mainly on the proposition that Tibet was an integral part of China and one of the PRC’s top priorities was to reunify the country, a view it had inherited from earlier regimes and many states in the international community supported or regarded as sustainable. The government in Lhasa was equally insistent that Tibet was independent, which meant that the Chinese action was a straight-out invasion of a foreign country by an aggressive power. The Chinese claim assumed that it was imperialism and Chinese weakness, and certainly not principle, which had led the preceding regimes of the Republic of China to withdraw from Tibet.¹³

In Tibet itself, though not in Tibetan areas outside Tibet, the CCP did initially leave the old political and social system in place. It did not carry out in Tibet the radical revolutionary reforms that characterized most of the rest of the PRC. The 1950s saw several anti-Chinese uprisings in Kham or eastern Tibet but, in the Tibetan heartland, a reasonable attempt both from the Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama to get on with each other. When, in March 1955, China’s State Council set up its Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, it appointed the Dalai Lama as chairman and the Panchen Lama as one of the deputy chairmen.

However, this situation was not to last. In March 1959, a major revolt against Chinese rule and for Tibetan independence took place in Lhasa. Anti-Chinese demonstrations and disturbances went on for several days with comparatively little Chinese response, but then Chinese troops attacked, suppressing the revolt within a week. However, although they had formally defeated the Tibetan forces, they also lost greatly in moral terms. The revolt “marked the end of the attempt to forge a co-existence between Communist China and Buddhist Tibet”.¹⁴ The Dalai Lama immediately fled to India, crossing into exile at the end of March. His flight was to have repercussions that persist to this day. He denounced the Chinese for suppressing the Tibetan people, accused them of turning their backs on the autonomy promised in the Seventeen-Point Agreement (see above, p. 4), and demanded Tibetan independence. He also led the establishment of an important Tibetan community in Dharamsala and set up the government in exile (the TGIE).

On their part, the Chinese authorities also accused the Dalai Lama of turning his back on the Seventeen-Point Agreement. With the strong support of the Panchen Lama, the Chinese government declared it would eliminate the regime the Dalai Lama had headed in Lhasa and institute “democratic reform”. By this, they meant that they would uproot the unequal feudal serf system that had prevailed in Tibet, distribute land to the poor and then proceed towards establishing a socialism like that already prevailing elsewhere in China.

The 1959 revolt in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama’s flight to India also affected China’s foreign relations. For a start, it had an immediate and very negative impact on relations with India, with which China had been extremely friendly over most of the 1950s. While it is true that

¹² For this period see the superb study by Goldstein, *Idem*, pp. 611-772. The specific quotations from the Seventeen-Point Agreement are on pp. 763, 765 and 766

¹³ For clear and succinct summaries of the positions held by the Dalai Lama’s supporters and the Chinese government, see Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, pp. 254-8

¹⁴ Shakya, p. 208

Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) stated his wish that the Dalai Lama should not use India as a base for political activities, Nehru was quite prepared to give him refuge and to let him denounce China from India. The CCP placed part of the blame for the revolt on India. The Chinese government also claimed that the Americans, with whom relations at the time were extremely hostile, were deliberately trying to stir up trouble in Tibet. Although the Dalai Lama and his supporters flatly denied at the time that they were receiving any help from the United States, there is ample evidence that the Chinese were right in their accusations. The Central Intelligence Agency provided such services as training Tibetans in the United States itself and flying them back to Tibet to resist China, and supplying them with equipment. This went on in total secrecy from 1957 until the American rapprochement with China in the early 1970s.¹⁵ Despite their disclaimers at the time, Tibetan participants are shown in a BBC television programme issued in 1998 as proud of the fact that they had fought in a secret war against China.¹⁶ With secrecy no longer required, their point of view was that they had been fighting in a national Tibetan war against the invading Chinese. The Chinese view was that this was external and unwarranted interference in China's domestic affairs.

In September 1965, the Chinese government set up the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This followed the model of autonomous areas, referred to above. There had already been eight Tibetan autonomous prefectures established in the 1950s, of which five were in Qinghai, with one each in Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, as well as two autonomous prefectures the Tibetans shared with another ethnic group. The TAR was the fifth and last autonomous region to be established in the PRC.¹⁷ While an autonomous region is in theory different from a province, the extent of administrative control is actually quite similar. As noted above, earlier regimes had never set up a province-level unit in Tibet. What this means is that the establishment of the TAR was a significant measure in terms of strengthening the power of the central Chinese authorities in Tibet.

The years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 are acknowledged almost universally as the worst in the PRC's history. This vast campaign was orchestrated by CCP Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976), who was obsessed by a vision of class struggle that saw everything as part of a war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Certainly, class struggle took precedence over national struggle to the extent that Mao regarded it as absurd for minorities to fight against majorities. The proletariat of all nationalities should be uniting in struggle against the overlords of all nationalities. The Tibetan areas were not spared the devastations of the Cultural Revolution. Monasteries were destroyed, religious persecution intensified and factional political struggle erupted on a major scale. In September 1968, Tibet became, along with Xinjiang, the last of China's province-level units to set up the Cultural Revolution's administrative form known as the revolutionary committee. Meanwhile, the Panchen Lama had already become increasingly critical of Chinese policy in Tibet as the situation became tenser in China generally. He fell from favour in 1964 and was imprisoned,

¹⁵ See for instance, Norbu, D., *China's Tibet Policy*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001, pp. 268-70 and Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, pp. 153-8

¹⁶ Sarin, R. and Sonam, T. (Dirs), *Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet*, London: BBC, 1998 (television documentary)

¹⁷ For a complete list of all autonomous regions, prefectures, counties, etc., together with their establishment dates, see Mackerras, C., *The New Handbook of Contemporary China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 254-6

not being released until 1978, by which time Mao was dead and his brainchild the Cultural Revolution over.¹⁸

1.2 Political Developments in the Reform Period

In December 1978, a major meeting of the CCP's Central Committee set China on the path of reform and modernization under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997). In June 1981, another such meeting finally rejected the Cultural Revolution, together with Mao Zedong's philosophy that lay behind it. Traditional cultures were revived, as were religions of all kinds. Class struggle was demoted and reinterpreted to the extent that it no longer mattered. China's "opening to the outside world" (*duiwai kaifang*) saw it expand and improve relations with the Western world and many other countries, and the PRC established formal diplomatic relations with the United States on 1 January 1979.

The downgrading of class struggle implied upgrading the recognition of national struggle. In July 1980 a special commentator in China's main official daily newspaper *Renmin ribao - People's Daily* even conceded that "the existence of classes is of much shorter duration than that of nationalities. After the withering away of the former, the latter will remain in existence for a long time".¹⁹ What this betokened was a major liberalization of policy towards the ethnic minorities. The 1982 Constitution gave much more space to the ethnic minorities than had its 1975 and 1978 predecessors and upgraded the idea of autonomy for them, stipulating, for instance, that the government head of each autonomous area must be a member of the relevant minority (Article 114).²⁰ In May 1984, the government adopted a Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities, fleshing out the concepts regarding ethnic minorities in the 1982 Constitution. In February 2001, an amended Regional Autonomy Law was adopted. Though its provisions were very similar to those in the 1984 original, changes were in the direction of stronger autonomy, not the reverse, for instance making it easier for ethnic areas to win central approval for regulations that differ from national law and refer specifically to their own localities.²¹ It does appear that this autonomy is not a sham, with ethnic minority government leaders enjoying some quite important privileges like the ability to depart from certain Chinese laws that might conflict with local ethnic customs and to allocate money to approved traditional religions, including maintaining and constructing religious buildings. On the other hand, it is important not to exaggerate the value of this autonomy. Both the Constitution and the 1984 Law, including in its amended form, are all absolutely insistent on the unity of China and that the ethnic areas are all integral parts of Chinese territory. Moreover, the requirement that the government head must belong to the ethnic minority exercising autonomy does not extend to the CCP, which is the real power-holder in China. Lastly, "separate regulations of autonomous regions", that is those that are not part of China's national practice, must be submitted to the central authorities for approval "before they go into effect".²²

¹⁸ See Shakya, pp. 314-71 and Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, pp. 166-86

¹⁹ *Renmin ribao - People's Daily*, 5 July 1980

²⁰ People's Republic of China, The [1982] Constitution of PRC, in *People's Republic of China Yearbook 2000*, Beijing, 2000, p. 19, *UNHCR RefWorld*, Issue 13, 2004, Vol. 2

²¹ See Mackerras, C., *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p. 39

²² Article 19 of the amended Law. See People's Republic of China, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyuan zizhi fa; Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy*, Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House, 2001, pp. 8 (Chinese version) and 40 (English version). For a study of varying forms of autonomy, which does not give China's very high marks, see Ghai, Y. (ed.), *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-ethnic States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. The laws relevant to

Like other ethnic areas, Tibet experienced a great increase in autonomy rights after the period of reform began in 1978. Late in May 1980, Hu Yaobang, who was already very senior in China's leadership hierarchy and was to become CCP chief the next year, visited Tibet and in a speech given on 29 May in effect apologized for China's behaviour in Tibet under the PRC. "We feel that our party has let the Tibetan people down", he commented. "We have worked nearly thirty years, but the life of the Tibetan people has not been notably improved", he went on.²³ He promised major reforms, such as far more efforts to implement autonomy in Tibet, a commitment to relieving the people of taxation and the adoption of policies that would revive the Tibetan economy, including an emphasis on tourism.

One of the ways of implementing more autonomy was to increase the number of Tibetan cadres, that is administrators, officials, CCP members, and professional people. Actually, this had been official policy for some time and, though the proportion did increase in the 1980s, it did not accelerate by comparison with earlier years. According to official sources, the proportion of Tibetan cadres to all cadres in the TAR was 44.5% in 1978, 54.5% in 1981, 60.3% in 1986 and 61.35% in 1989.²⁴ These rises were of course positive, but actual Tibetan power did not rise as much as the proportions might suggest. One survey of the TAR carried out in 1988 found that "the lower the administrative level, the higher the proportion of Tibetan employees" was likely to be.²⁵ Another way to improve autonomy was to appoint a CCP secretary more acceptable to the Tibetan people than the series of Han that had occupied the position up to this time. In mid-1985, Wu Jinghua arrived in Lhasa to take up this position. What was striking about this was that Wu was not a Han Chinese but a member of the Yi nationality, most of whom live in southwest China and speak a language related to Tibetan. Wu did indeed make a more favourable impression than his predecessor, but Tsering Shakya claims that Tibetans were resentful that the position was not given to a Tibetan, "which implied that no Tibetans were ready to take up such a responsible job".²⁶

The early to mid-1980s certainly did see a more relaxed atmosphere in Tibet. One sign of this was that large numbers of tourists from outside China visited Tibet, even including backpackers. Wu Jinghua greatly expanded religious freedoms and early in 1986 allowed the revival of the great Monlam festival, which sees thousands of monks and pilgrims convene in Lhasa and is one of the most important occasions in the Tibetan religious calendar. However, late in September and early in October 1987 several major demonstrations for independence took place in Lhasa, with monks taking the lead. The Chinese reaction was immediate and harsh, with troop and police presence strengthened and casualties resulting. On 5 March the next year, on the last day of the Monlam Festival, further demonstrations for independence

autonomy in the Tibetan areas of China, including those outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, are considered in great detail in Sorensen, T.C. and Phillips, D.L., *Legal Standards and Autonomy Options for Minorities in China: The Tibetan Case*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2004, pp. 7-32

²³ Quoted in Wang Yao, Hu Yaobang's Visit to Tibet, May 22-31, 1980, an Important Development in the Chinese Government's Tibet Policy, in Barnett, R. (ed.), *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, London: Hurst, 1994, p. 288

²⁴ The first three of these figures are cited in Shakya, p. 390 and the last one in Mackerras, *China's Minorities...*, p. 158

²⁵ Ma Rong., Han and Tibetan Residential Patterns in Lhasa, *The China Quarterly*, No. 128, December 1991, p. 826

²⁶ Shakya, p. 401

broke out in Lhasa. The Chinese again suppressed the demonstrations ruthlessly. This time a video was secretly made showing police beating up monks, this strongly negative image being brought to the outside world and turning out to be immensely influential. On 5 March 1989, demonstrations for independence again erupted in Lhasa, this time commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the 1959 revolt. Police opened fire, killing a group of demonstrators. On 7 March 1989, the government declared martial law in Lhasa, the first time this had happened in the history of the PRC, not lifting it until 1 May 1990.²⁷

The demonstrations clearly had domestic policy implications for the Chinese government. Debate took place in the central leadership over whether the flexible policy of Wu Jinghua had been successful. Supporters argued that it had not been carried out properly and needed more time to win over the Tibetans to Chinese rule. Hard-liners argued that all the more tolerant policy had achieved was to make the Tibetans, and especially the religious elite, more restive and convinced they could gain independence after all. In December 1988, Wu Jinghua was replaced as the CCP Tibet secretary by Hu Jintao, who was to become the national CCP general-secretary in November 2002 and national president in March 2003. The fact that the authorities had suppressed the demonstrations and imposed martial law showed that the tough line was winning.

The demonstrations and Chinese reaction also had significant international implications, especially for China's relations with the United States, which had been remarkably good since 1979. The first of the demonstrations occurred just a few days after the Dalai Lama had, on 21 September 1987, met with members of two Congressional bodies in Washington. The Chinese blamed him and the Americans for inciting the riots. Although the American Congress had earlier expressed grave concern over Chinese human rights abuses in Tibet, the demonstrations led on to a much more hostile dialogue over Tibet, with the American Congress and Administration issuing condemnations of the Chinese authorities for human rights abuses, while the Chinese responded by demanding that the United States stop interfering in China's domestic affairs.

Also involved were relations with the Dalai Lama, whose international influence had expanded significantly in the 1980s, especially in the West. From 1979 on, he sent a series of delegations for negotiations with Chinese leaders, his brother Gyalo Thondup taking a high profile. In June 1988, he made a speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in which he proposed a Tibet "in association with" China, with China determining matters of defence and foreign policy, while Tibet would enjoy complete domestic autonomy. By "Tibet" he meant not only U-Tsang, approximately equivalent to the TAR, but also Kham and Amdo, that is the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Gansu, the implication being that the proposal would have required China to give up political control over those areas as well as over the TAR. Although it was not until February 1990 that the Chinese issued a written rebuttal through their Embassy in New Delhi, it was never a possibility that they would accept the Strasbourg proposals. Ironically, these came under attack not only from the Chinese leadership but also from among the Dalai Lama's own supporters, on the grounds that they did not demand total independence from China. It seemed the proposal had no future and it was withdrawn in 1991.²⁸

²⁷ For more detail on issues of Tibet and minorities questions in the 1980s see Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, pp. 153-66.

²⁸ For an account of the Chinese-Dalai Lama dialogue from 1979 see Norbu, pp. 315-39

In the meantime, the Tenth Panchen Lama had died of a heart attack in January 1989. Through their Buddhist Association, the Chinese invited the Dalai Lama to China to take part in the memorial ceremony, suggesting he might also take the opportunity for talks. However, for a variety of reasons, including a fear that he would be treated as a minor figure as well as a suspicion among members of his own TGIE that he would accept a compromise with China they did not want, he was persuaded to turn down the invitation. The US-based Tibet specialist Melvyn Goldstein has commented that “many look back at this as one of the most important lost opportunities in the post-1978 era”.²⁹ The irritation of the Chinese leadership with the Dalai Lama’s activities obviously increased with the demonstrations of March 1989 leading to the imposition of martial law. Not surprisingly, they did not share the joy felt among so many in the international community when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize towards the end of the same year.

2 Overview of the Situation since the 1990s

We can summarize the context of the contemporary period relevant to China and Tibet as follows:

- China has continued and expanded its very rapid economic development, although disparities between rich and poor have widened greatly.
- The economic growth has helped the strategic rise of China, and it is exercising growing influence in the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.
- China has generally got on well with the outside world, including the Western countries. Two issues that have militated against improving relations are Taiwan and human rights. Taiwan is outside the scope of the present paper, but there will be much more to say about human rights below.
- Socially China has seen increasing disturbances in such areas as labour and rural disputes, but they have been patchy and do not seem so far to pose a serious short-term threat to the survival of the CCP.
- The CCP general-secretary from June 1989 to November 2002 and Chinese president from March 1993 to March 2003 was Jiang Zemin, while his successor in both posts is Hu Jintao. The transfer of power was much the smoothest of any in China for over a century.

We can summarize Chinese policy towards Tibet in the following points:

- China has exercised zero tolerance for separatist movements.
- It has striven to bring about rapid economic growth, including raising the living standards of the people, believing that prosperity will make the Tibetan people more willing to stay within the PRC.
- It has maintained a limited autonomy, including a degree of religious and cultural freedom, but tried actively to increase Chinese control and cracked down on any signs that Tibetan culture poses a threat to the Chinese state.

These policies are actually quite similar to those towards other ethnic minorities in China, but separatism and threats to the Chinese state are not major problems other than in Tibet and Xinjiang.

²⁹ Goldstein, *The Snow Lion...*, p. 90

2.1 Political and Economic Overview

In July 1994, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council jointly convened in Beijing their Third Forum on the Work in Tibet. Many of the most senior leaders attended, including the CCP General Secretary and Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng. What the Forum did was to formalize policy in Tibet for the indefinite future, though in fact the main ideas had already been established beforehand. The central theme of the forum was summed up in the slogan *yishou zhua fazhan, yishou zhua wending*, “with one hand grasp development, with the other hand grasp stability”, meaning very simply the dual task of expanding the economy and improving the people’s standard of living on the one hand and maintaining social stability by preventing secessionism on the other.³⁰

The policy of zero tolerance for separatism appears to have been generally successful from Beijing’s point of view. The years following the lifting of martial law in May 1990 have been generally calm in Tibet. This contrasts both with the preceding period in Tibet and with the 1990s in the Muslim region of Xinjiang in China’s far northwest, which has replaced Tibet as China’s most active area in terms of separatist activity. According to former director of the Tibet Information Network, Robert Barnett, there was a conscious change of policy and practice from “passive” to “active” policing in Tibet. As he puts it, “in effect, this meant ‘actively’ using plainclothes police in small teams on the streets, with back-up troops off-street, and focusing on selective pre-emptive arrests of likely activists instead of ‘passively’ using large armed patrols and shooting demonstrators once protests had broken out.”³¹

The most serious public demonstrations for independence were in May 1993. What is interesting about these is that they were initially protests against the government over rising inflation, not for independence, and saw attacks on government and public security organs. Moreover, the Chinese had obviously developed their techniques of crowd control since 1989. Police kept their distance until the slogans changed to calls for independence. Even then, they used non-lethal weapons, such as tear gas, to disperse the crowds. The result was that casualties were small. In contrast to the disturbances of the late 1980s, the Chinese denied that anybody was killed. Foreign reports did claim a few deaths, but very much smaller in number than in the demonstrations of the late 1980s.³² We might note also two anniversaries when Tibetan exiles and others expected anti-Chinese demonstrations, which did not in the event happen. These were the fortieth anniversary of the March 1959 revolt and the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the May 1951 Seventeen-Point Agreement. Concerning the first of these, the thirtieth anniversary had occasioned the demonstrations resulting in martial law in 1989, but in 1999, nothing happened. As to the second, there were of course big celebrations in Tibet, but they were government organized, not anti-Chinese protests. Tibet’s integration with China is firmer in the first years of the twenty-first century than at any time in the past. This is not to say that feeling on behalf of Tibetan independence has evaporated. However, it has weakened and gone underground. The main source of it is the monasteries, which will be considered separately below.

³⁰ Zhao Shenying (ed.), *Zhonggong Xizang dangshi da shiji, 1949-1994* [Chronology of Party History in Tibet under the CCP, 1949-1994], Lhasa: Tibet People’s Press, 1995, pp. 456-9

³¹ Barnett, R., Chen Kuiyuan and the Marketisation of Policy, in McKay (ed.), p. 230

³² For example, a Kyodo News report cited two Japanese tourists as claiming that up to nine people had been killed in two days of demonstrations (24 to 25 May 1993). See Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation (April–June 1993), *The China Quarterly*, No. 135, September 1993

The fact that the 1990s saw a policy of zero tolerance on separatism did not mean total abandonment of limited autonomy. For instance, the proportion of Tibetan cadres in the TAR continued to rise, and Chinese official media put forward figures showing the trend with pride. These said that Tibetan cadres in the TAR were about 66% of the total in the early 1990s, rising to 74.9% in 1998.³³ According to one scholarly claim, “most Tibetan cadres are not policymakers, but do implement policies that they can bend to fit their agendas”.³⁴ In 1998 some 96% of chief judges at the regional, prefecture, municipal and county levels in the TAR were Tibetans.³⁵ However, the experiment with appointing a non-Han CCP secretary has not been repeated and all of Tibet’s CCP secretaries since Wu Jinghua have been Han,³⁶ though there are Tibetan deputy secretaries. The Tibet CCP secretary succeeding Hu Jintao was Chen Kuiyuan, who held the post from 1992 to 2000. Robert Barnett credits him with the “energetic implementation” of the dual policy of development and stability, as well as with raising the standard of living and achieving double-digit economic growth rates while he was in control.³⁷ On 23 July 1994, at the end of the Third Forum on the Work in Tibet, the CCP Central Committee decided on an immense investment campaign to improve Tibet’s economy, including itself investing 2,380 million yuan in 62 projects in Tibet in the fields of agriculture, water conservation, energy, transportation, telecommunications, industry, culture, education, public health, civil engineering and infrastructure.³⁸ The “inland” (*neidi*) provinces of China, meaning those mainly Han provinces east of Tibet, were asked to contribute to this strategy on behalf of the Tibetan economy. In 2000, the Chinese government began its Great Western Development Strategy, which aims to develop the economy of the western provinces by such means as expanding outside investment. These “western” regions, virtually all of which are much poorer than those of the eastern seaboard, include Tibet as well as almost all China’s other ethnic minority areas. In contrast to the 62 projects, however, they are not designed specifically for Tibet.

According to official figures, Tibet’s gross domestic product has grown from 3,053 million in 1991 to 16,142 million in 2002, in both cases being substantially the lowest in all China. However, Tibet has much the smallest population of any province-level unit in China. If we measure the gross domestic product per person, the growth has been from 1,388 yuan in 1991 to 6,093 yuan in 2002.³⁹ These figures are very low if measured against the provinces of China’s eastern seaboard, but they are not by any means the lowest in China. While it is true that economic levels have risen in all China’s provinces, the rate of growth in Tibet has been impressive and signifies a major improvement in living standards. Economic levels in other

³³ Zheng Chunjian and Xeirab Nyima, Human Rights in Tibet: Past and Present, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 35, No. 8, 24 February-1 March 1992, p. 23 for the early 1990s figure and, for the 1998 one, People’s Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, China’s Policy on National Minorities and Its Practice, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 42, No. 42, 18 October 1999, p. 23

³⁴ Sautman, B. and Eng, I., Tibet: Development for Whom?, *China Information: A Journal on Contemporary China Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2001, p. 57

³⁵ New China News Agency, 24 February 1998, cited in Sautman and Eng, p. 59

³⁶ CCP secretaries in Tibet since Wu Jinghua: Hu Jintao (1988-1992), Chen Kuiyuan (1992-2000), Guo Jinling (2000-2004) and Yang Chuantang (from December 2004)

³⁷ Barnett, Chen Kuiyuan..., p. 231

³⁸ Zhao Shenying (ed.), pp. 459-60

³⁹ People’s Republic of China, State Statistical Bureau (comp.), *Zhongguo tongji nianjian; Statistical Yearbook of China 1993*, Beijing: China Statistics Press, 1993, p. 38; People’s Republic of China, National Bureau of Statistics (comp.), *Zhongguo tongji nianjian China; Statistical Yearbook 2003*, Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2003, pp. 62, 65

Tibetan areas, in Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan, have seen similar rises. It is claimed that life expectancy at birth in Tibet rose from 35.5 to 67 years over the half-century from 1952 to 2002, with the number of centenarians rising to 116, Tibet being one of the province-level units with the highest number of centenarians.⁴⁰

However, economic growth everywhere in China has been accompanied by a widening of disparities and the same is the case in Tibet. There are disparities in different Tibetan regions, both in the TAR and outside it, and between pastoral and agricultural communities; and in particular, there are disparities between the cities and the countryside. Tibetan diaspora sources charge that the uneven development is along ethnic lines, with the Tibetans remaining significantly poorer than the Han Chinese settlers.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Chinese statistics do not divide wealth along ethnic lines. However, impressionistic evidence would appear to back up the suggestion that Tibetans are generally poorer than Han, both in the TAR and other Tibetan communities. The present author also found signs, during recent visits to Tibet, especially in 2002, that non-Tibetan immigrants manage the majority of the most prosperous urban enterprises, though Tibetans provide most or all of the subordinate staff.

However, an alternative point of view claims that the disparities between Tibetans and Han are not so much ethnic as a reflection of the urban/rural divide. In the Tibetan areas, Han tend to congregate much more in the cities than in the countryside and, as more or less everywhere else in the less developed world, the urban areas are far better off economically than the rural. Two contemporary scholars put it like this:

Based on our own observations in Tibet and on the pattern of relative degrees of inter-urban and urban-rural disparities found throughout China, we deem it likely that the differences between urban Han and urban Tibetans are substantially less than the differences between urban and rural Tibetans, let alone the difference between the whole urban population and the whole rural population.⁴²

Life may have got better for the Tibetans in China, but it is still miserably poor for many of them. The Hong Kong based journalist Daniel Kwan cites a senior official of the Bureau of Tibetan Poverty-Relief, Zhao Xianzhong, as claiming that there were 480,000 poor people in the TAR in 1994 but only 70,000 in 2001. However, his definition of poverty was special to Tibetan circumstances. A farmer earning less than 600 yuan (about US\$ 75) a year, or a herdsman earning less than 700 yuan a year, is considered poverty-stricken. Zhao acknowledged that if the boundary were set at 1,300 yuan a year, then there would be 1.2 million people below the poverty line in Tibet.⁴³ It is worth pointing out in this context that 1,300 yuan per year works out at about US\$ 0.45 per day, as against the US \$1 per day that the World Bank takes as its boundary mark for poverty. Thus, although the government deserves credit for poverty alleviation since 1994, the fact is that those who have succeeded in escaping what the official line regards as poverty are still very poor. It is hardly surprising that many of those who have escaped poverty revert to it when the markets shrink or the

⁴⁰ *Renmin ribao -People's Daily*, 24 May 2002

⁴¹ One example of many such sources is Tibetan Youth Congress, *Development for Whom? A Report on the Chinese Development Strategies in Tibet and their Impacts*, Dharamsala, 1995

⁴² Sautman and Eng, p. 22

⁴³ Kwan, D., *Figures Hide Scale of Poverty in Tibet*, *South China Morning Post*, 16 August 2001

weather turns bad. Health delivery is so basic in many places as to be virtually useless. The life expectancy of 67 years in 2002 seems impressive, but it is still quite a bit behind the claimed Chinese national level of 71.8 years in 2001.⁴⁴

One important question concerns employment. Do Tibetans suffer discrimination in finding jobs? The February 2001 amendments to the 1984 Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities (see above p. 7) include a stipulation for affirmative action for ethnic minorities in government employment,⁴⁵ which suggests strongly that any discrimination against ethnic minorities in employment is contrary to government policy. However, policy also puts great emphasis on development, and the result is frequently wider inequality. It does appear that some Han employers deliberately favour employing Han people over Tibetan in the belief that they work harder and are more competent. However, such discrimination is due not to government policy but to entrenched feelings of superiority among many Han people.⁴⁶

One of the projects flowing from the Great Western Development Strategy is highly relevant to the Tibetan areas and illustrates some serious problems connected with development in Tibet: namely a railway of about 1,100 km, linking Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa, which began construction in 2001 and is expected to come into operation in 2007. Firstly, it illustrates the issue of employment differentials between Han and non-Han. The 27,000 skilled workers who started the construction were from inland China, almost all Han. Only in 2003 were 6,000 Tibetans taken on, mostly in manual and carrying jobs, and therefore at much lower payment rates.⁴⁷ It is not policy that Tibetans should get lower pay than Han, but the realities are that they are doing less well-paid jobs because up to now they are less well qualified. To train them to the level where they can compete with Han will take time, and in the meantime, administrators, both Han and Tibetan, are very much open to the criticism that they are discriminating against Tibetans. Another major criticism of the railway line from Golmud to Lhasa is that it aims merely to strengthen China's political control over Tibet.⁴⁸ It certainly will do that. It will integrate the Tibetan economy more into the Chinese through better transportation of goods from the east to Tibet. It will enable the Chinese military to send troops and equipment more easily into Tibet. Nevertheless, it will also benefit the Tibetan economy in various ways. It will mean that tourists, both Chinese and foreign, will be able to visit Tibet in greater numbers in a context where tourism is a major factor in the Chinese (and Tibetan) economy. The goods exchanged while the Tibetan economy is integrated into the Chinese will no doubt profit business and commerce and the Tibetan people as a whole, even though the rural people may take longer to benefit than the urban.

At the same time as China has increased its hold and the Tibetan economy expanded, Tibet has become much more visible in the international arena. Since the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he has become a major figure on the international stage and

⁴⁴ *Renmin ribao - People's Daily*, 28 March 2002

⁴⁵ See People's Republic of China, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyue zizhi fa*, pp. 9 (Chinese version), 42 (English version)

⁴⁶ This applies not only to Han attitudes towards Tibetans but to many other minorities as well. See, e.g., some discussion on Han attitudes towards the Yi people in Harrell, S., Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them, in Harrell, S. (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 25-6

⁴⁷ Goh, Sui Noi, Boom in Tibet but at High Cost, *Straits Times*, 27 September 2003

⁴⁸ For instance, see International Campaign for Tibet, *Crossing the Line: China's Railway to Lhasa, Tibet*, Washington, 2003

regularly travels to foreign countries, often including visiting their leaders. At the same time, however, the Chinese government has done its best to undermine his influence and raises protests when foreign countries welcome him. Chinese influence internationally has increased significantly and most governments see it as in their interests to accommodate the Chinese as far as they can. Western and other governments remain very critical of the Chinese for their human rights record in Tibet, but despite what they might say, criticizing human rights abuses takes a much lower priority than getting on with China, especially in the economic area. Virtually all countries, and the United Nations, recognize Tibet as part of China, even though free Tibet movements retain considerable influence among ordinary people in Western and other countries and even among power-holders, such as the American Congress and the European Parliament.

In July 1996, the Dalai Lama gave a major speech to the British Parliament in Westminster, in which he attacked the Chinese for human rights abuses and for “cultural genocide”. However, he also said that what he was advocating for Tibet was not complete independence, but “genuine autonomy”, a formula similar to what he had proposed in 1988 in Strasbourg. This time, however, he has not withdrawn from his proposal. Both the Chinese and many among the Tibetan diaspora communities remain very critical. The Chinese continue to denounce him as a splittist, while many Tibetan émigrés regret that he has abandoned the demand for full independence. Nevertheless, at least the Dalai Lama and the TGIE have thought it useful to begin discussions with authorities in China. In July 2002, the Dalai Lama’s elder brother Gyalo Thondup made his first trip to the TAR since leaving Tibet in 1959. In September the same year, Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama’s special envoy to the United States, visited Lhasa and had talks with Legchog, Deputy CCP Secretary in Tibet and a Tibetan.⁴⁹ Though the talks did not get far, they have already led on to two further delegations, in mid-2003 and September 2004, with discussions already begun on the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet. Also very striking is that in October, the Dalai Lama said in an interview with a *Time* journalist that he thought Tibet should remain within China. “Tibet is backward”, he is reported to have said. “It’s a big land, rich in natural resources, but we lack the technology or expertise [to exploit them]. So, if we remain in China, we might get a greater benefit, provided it respects our culture and environment and gives us some kind of guarantee.”⁵⁰

Another factor affecting the international situation with regard to Tibet is the violent incidents on 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington. What these have done is to change American policy and to a large extent international discourse towards fighting terrorism, with a lesser priority allocated to human rights. Although Tibet is not directly involved, the change does mean that Chinese human rights abuses there attract less attention internationally than they did before the incidents occurred. Speaking specifically about the importance of Tibet in American China policy, one specialist has written that “up until 11 September 2001 there was a debate raging within foreign policy circles over US policy towards China - no more”, largely because the US needs China in the battle against terrorism. The result, he claims, is that Washington and Beijing will “find that their interests begin to converge” and “the Tibet issue will subside further and further into obscurity”.⁵¹ While this is an exaggeration, and there is still debate in American foreign policy circles on policy towards

⁴⁹ See Armitage, C., Tibetan Snub to Dalai Lama, *The Australian* [Sydney], 17 September 2002

⁵⁰ Perry, A., A Conversation with the Dalai Lama, *Time Asia Magazine*, 25 October 2004

⁵¹ Grunfeld, A.T., A Brief Survey of Tibetan Relations with the United States, in McKay (ed.), p. 204

China, the overall point is accurate enough. Because the US is keen to get on with China, Tibet and its concerns loom far less on the American government radar screen than before 2001.

2.2 Tibetan Buddhism

We turn now to a brief treatment of Tibetan Buddhism, which has for centuries been essential to Tibetan culture, society and identity. Religious persecution is also one of the areas over which China is most often accused of human rights abuses, which will be treated in more detail in a later section, while this account is limited to a brief overview of how Tibetan Buddhism has fared since 1990.

Chinese law protects “normal religious activities” and forbids discrimination against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. However, it also prohibits the use of religion to disrupt public order or threaten the interests of the state or national unity.⁵² The Chinese state has a list of religions it tolerates, which includes Buddhism, but maintains some control through such methods as CCP cells or “democratic management committees”, established in all monasteries. There has been a major religious revival everywhere in China since the early 1980s. In all Tibetan areas the present author has visited, Tibetan Buddhism is openly and fervently practised. Monasteries, large and small, are flourishing, pilgrims are numerous, and almost all houses visited had a shrine or room allocated to prayer. Almost all Tibetan families and people interviewed, both in Tibet and other Tibetan areas, claimed that they were strong devotees of Tibetan Buddhism. Even the house of a CCP member in Gyantse had a shrine room for prayer. CCP members are not allowed to practise Buddhism, though they may attend religious festivals for social reasons. He said that because his wife and most of his family were fervently Buddhist and wanted the shrine he was prepared to have it, even though he himself did not believe in Buddhism. A survey carried out in 1996 by a team led by Professor Herbert Yee (Yu Zhen) of Hong Kong’s Baptist University among 2,758 Tibetans in the TAR, Qinghai and Sichuan found that 86% believed in Tibetan Buddhism, 10.5% had no religion, and 3.5% other religions, such as the traditional Bon and Islam. Most of the non-believers were cadres and CCP members.⁵³

In the past, each family was expected to give a son to the monastic order, and the proportion of the population in the clerical order was very high, both in “political” and “ethnographic” Tibet. According to Melvyn Goldstein, in 1951 there were about 115,000 monks in some 2,500 monasteries, or about 10 to 15 per cent of Tibet’s male population.⁵⁴ Although these figures declined drastically over the next quarter-century or so, they have begun to rise again since the early 1980s. Official figures for 2000 and 2004 give the same figure of 46,000 monks and some 1,700 religious places, such as monasteries and temples, implying no

⁵² Laws, including articles on freedom of religion and restrictions on it, include the 1982 Constitution (Article 36) and The Law of the PRC on National Regional Autonomy (1984) and its 2001 amended form (Article 11). New religious affairs provisions coming into force on 1 March 2005 add to but do not alter the essential concepts already enshrined in the Constitution and elsewhere.

⁵³ Yu Zhen and Guo Zhenglin, Xizang, Sichuan Gansu Zangqu shehui fazhan diaocha baogao [Report of a Social Survey in the Tibetan Areas of Tibet, Sichuan and Gansu], in Yu Zhen and Guo Zhenglin (eds.), *Zhongguo Zangqu xiandaihua, lilun, shijian, zhengce* [The Modernization of China’s Tibetan Regions, Theory, Practice, Policy], Beijing: Central Nationalities University Press, 1999, pp. 46-7

⁵⁴ Goldstein, M.C., The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery, in Goldstein and Kapstein (eds.), p. 15. For further comments on even higher figures, both in “political” and “ethnographic” Tibet, see Mackerras, C., *China’s Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration Since 1912*, Melbourne: Longman, 1995, pp. 25-6

recounts in the interim.⁵⁵ In a visit to the Tibetan areas of Sichuan at the end of 1996, the present writer found not only flourishing monasteries, but several families in which one of the men lived as a monk in the shrine room, having dedicated himself to religion. Several independent sources also indicated that this was a very common practice among Tibetans. It is therefore possible that the official figure of 46,000 is an undercount, and indeed that despite the identical figures for 2000 and 2004, it has continued to grow in the twenty-first century.⁵⁶ One very interesting phenomenon is the number of boys who enter monasteries. These were numerous in virtually all monasteries visited in Tibet and Tibetan areas since the mid-1980s. In the Muli Monastery in western Sichuan, the abbot stated in 1997 that boys often came in at the age of seven but the rules said that they must be permitted to leave until they committed themselves permanently to the monastic life, which they could not do until they were eighteen. He said that in fact none had left since the monastery had reopened in 1981 following the Cultural Revolution. At the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse in June 2002, it was stated that the monastery would not accept boys below the age of ten, but the age of decision on whether to stay permanently was eighteen. The boys must fulfil several conditions before entering the monastic order. They must be willing to enter the monastery, they must get the permission of the Democratic Management Committee and they must pass an examination involving memorizing 135 chapters of the sutras. The pass mark is 95 per cent, but those who fail can try again.

The “democratic management committees” of the Buddhist monasteries, the functions of which appear to have strengthened since the mid-1990s, constitute one aspect of the restrictions imposed on Tibetan Buddhism. These have varied in intensity since the 1980s, being especially severe under Chen Kuiyuan. Perhaps the best-known manifestation of Chen’s policy on Buddhism was the ban placed on the public display of pictures of the Dalai Lama. This came into force in April 1996, but according to Robert Barnett, had been planned by Chen almost from the time he took up duties as Tibet’s CCP secretary in 1992.⁵⁷ When the present author visited Tibet in 1990, vendors made and sold pictures of the Dalai Lama in large quantities and they were everywhere on display in the monasteries. However, during a 1997 visit, none at all were evident. Following the campaign against the Dalai Lama’s pictures came a “patriotic education campaign” aimed at making monks more loyal to the Chinese state. Impressionistic evidence from visits to numerous monasteries in the TAR and other Tibetan areas in China suggest that opposition to the Chinese state is stronger there than in the community as a whole. Melvyn Goldstein claims from intensive research at the Drepung Monastery outside Lhasa, that all monks there wanted the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet and “virtually all support his efforts to secure Tibetan independence”. He adds that “some monks believe these efforts are not only unrealistic but also harmful to the monastery and the revival of religion”.⁵⁸ The reason for their attitude is very simple: they can study and follow the monastic life quite well under present circumstances, but anti-Chinese political

⁵⁵ People’s Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, Fifty Years of Progress in China’s Human Rights, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 43, No. 9, 28 February 2000, p. 49; People’s Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, *Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet*, Beijing, 23 May 2004. See especially Section IV: The Tibetan People Have the Freedom to Inherit and Develop Their Traditional Culture and to Practice Their Religious Belief, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20040524/> [accessed January 2005]

⁵⁶ Much of the information in this and the following paragraphs is based on the author’s personal observations and interviews during repeated visits to Tibet during the last 20 years

⁵⁷ Barnett, Chen Kuiyuan..., p. 234

⁵⁸ Goldstein, *The Revival of Monastic Life...*, p. 42

activism would certainly provoke a Chinese response that could only make things more dangerous and painful.

In 1995, another important event took place in Tibetan Buddhism that exemplified Chinese hostility to the Dalai Lama's influence. Following the death of the Tenth Panchen Lama in 1989, the Chinese wanted to have the Eleventh selected, and they did this through the Panchen Lama's seat, the Tashilhunpo Monastery, especially its acting abbot Chadrel Rinpoche. Chadrel Rinpoche informed the Dalai Lama of the choice, and he in May 1995 pre-empted the Chinese authorities by announcing the identity of the Eleventh Panchen Lama. Humiliated, the Chinese reacted furiously: they detained the boy himself and arrested Chadrel Rinpoche, accusing him of treacherous collusion with the Dalai Lama. Having made their own, alternative, selection, they had him enthroned at the Tashilhunpo Monastery in December 1995. It might be added that at a visit to the Monastery in 2002 the present writer found only admiration for the enthroned Panchen Lama, who was about to give a major sermon the day after, and the impression given was that any possible antagonism towards the Chinese did not extend towards their choice as Panchen Lama.

In May 1997, Chadrel Rinpoche was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, his dealings with the Dalai Lama being considered tantamount to betraying state secrets and trying to split the nation.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, the international community generally condemned China for trumping up charges against Chadrel Rinpoche. As far as the rejected choice as Eleventh Panchen Lama was concerned, Tibetan exiles and their supporters regarded him simply as the world's youngest prisoner of conscience.⁶⁰ On the other hand, spokespeople for the Chinese government said that he was living the life of a normal Tibetan boy. Foreign media access to him was refused and when, in September 1998, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson visited China, including Tibet, she was assured that he was safe but not told his whereabouts. Chadrel Rinpoche was released in January 2002.

The twentieth century ended with another propaganda setback for China in Tibetan affairs. The Seventeenth Karmapa Lama, the third most influential in the Tibetan hierarchy after the Dalai and the Panchen Lamas, fled Tibet for India, where he arrived in January 2000. The Karmapa had been trained in Tibet as a good example of a well-trained incarnate lama who could be reasonably loyal to China, but the Dalai Lama also admired him as a good Buddhist. In February 2001, to China's annoyance, the Indian government gave him refugee status, lifting restrictions on his travel.⁶¹

2.3 Population Issues

In his speech before the British Parliament in July 1996, the Dalai Lama said that "the destruction of cultural artefacts and traditions coupled with the mass influx of Chinese into Tibet amounts to cultural genocide". TGIE sources claim a figure of about 7.5 million Chinese in the Tibetan areas, especially outside the TAR itself, as against only 6 million

⁵⁹ Two quite detailed accounts of the Eleventh Panchen Lama affair can be found in Goldstein, *The Snow Lion...*, pp. 105-11 and Shakya, pp. 440-7.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Harris, M. and Jones, S. (eds.), *Tibet Since 1950: Silence, Prison or Exile*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 2000, pp. 160-3

⁶¹ For an account of the Seventeenth Karmapa Lama by a journalist and broadcaster see Brown, M., *The Dance of 17 Lives: The Incredible True Story of Tibet's 17th Karmapa*, London: Bloomsbury, 2004. See also Naher, G., *Wrestling the Dragon: In Search of the Boy Lama Who Defied China*, Sydney: Random House Australia, 2004

Tibetans.⁶² In 1984, the TGIE's Bureau of Information issued statistics of casualties due to the Chinese occupation, in which it claimed that in all Tibet, including Kham and Amdo, 1,207,487 Tibetans had been killed, the largest component being 432,707 in battles.⁶³ Claims such as that the Chinese are swamping Tibetans in their own country and that 1.2 million Tibetans have died due to Chinese occupation have sunk into the popular imagination, especially in the West.⁶⁴ What they tell us is just how controversial population issues are in the case of Tibet. A closer examination suggests that these claims should be treated with the deepest scepticism. Let us begin with the total population. There were several counts of the population in the pre-1950 period, but all were extremely unreliable.⁶⁵ What is likely, however, is that there was a long-term decline in the population until the middle of the twentieth century. The great Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci concluded, based on research carried out through travels to Tibet from 1927 to 1948, that the population of all Tibet, including Kham and Amdo, was between two and three million. He also comments, significantly, that "there were certainly more in the past, as may be inferred from surviving traces of intensive cultivation and from irrigation works in now almost deserted places".⁶⁶ There are many reasons for this decline in population, but they include:

- the high proportion of males in the monastic order, together with the custom of polyandry;
- widespread venereal diseases;
- high infant mortality rates as well as frequent smallpox epidemics and in some places endemic goitre;⁶⁷
- a declining ecological base; and
- a violent lifestyle in Kham, then part of the Chinese province of Xikang, at least in the 1930s and 1940s.⁶⁸

There have been five censuses held under the PRC, applying to 1 July 1953, 1 July 1964, 1 July 1982, 1 July 1990 and 1 November 2000. The results for Tibetans, including all those in the PRC, not just in Tibet itself, are shown in the following table.

⁶² For one example, see Tibetan Government in Exile, *Tibet at a Glance*, London, 30 September 1996, <http://www.tibet.com/glance.html> [accessed January 2005].

⁶³ See, e.g., Kewley, V., *Tibet: Behind the Ice Curtain*, London: Collins, 1990, p. 392

⁶⁴ For example, the popular film *Seven Years in Tibet* concludes with the claim that the Chinese occupation has led to about a million Tibetan deaths. The film, which is based on Heinrich Harrer's book of the same title, came out in 1997 and was directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, with popular pro-Tibet activist film-star Brad Pitt playing the role of Heinrich Harrer.

⁶⁵ For a consideration of Tibetan population history before the PRC, see Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, pp. 126-30

⁶⁶ See Tucci, G., *Tibet: Land of Snows*, London: Elek Books, 1967, p. 19

⁶⁷ Regolo Moise wrote about health and population issues based on a visit to Tibet in 1948. See Moise, R., Remarks on Medicine and the State of Health in Tibet, in Tucci, G., *To Lhasa and Beyond, Diary of the Expedition to Tibet in the Year MCMXLVIII*, Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1956, p. 167

⁶⁸ A Chinese academic investigation team from the National Central University in Chongqing in 1939 in part of Xikang found many abandoned hovels and waste land due to pillage by *yi* "aborigines" (mostly the Yi ethnic group, also some Tibetans), with many tens of thousands of lives lost due to such raids and Chinese government punitive actions against them. See Wu Wenhui and Zhu Jianhua, Xikang renkou wenti, shang [Population Problems of Xikang, Part I], *Bianzhang gonglun* [Border Politics Forum], Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1944, pp. 34-5

Table 1: The Tibetan Population According to the PRC Censuses⁶⁹

Year	Population	Annual average rate of increase since previous census
1953	2,775,622	not applicable
1964	2,501,174	-0.90%
1982	3,870,068	3.04%
1990	4,593,330	2.34%
2000	5,416,021	1.73%

The decline in population between 1953 and 1964 can be explained by several factors, including the deaths following the various revolts of the 1950s and that of 1959; the famines of the late 1950s and early 1960s (mainly in the Tibetan areas outside Tibet itself); and continuing decline due to factors similar to those already attributed to the period before 1950. Another major factor is emigration, which accounted for many thousands of people through the 1950s and after and formed the basis of the Dharamsala community, but of course this is not included among the more than 1.2 million casualties the TGIE claims. The figures show that since the early 1960s, the Tibetan population has been increasing, probably for the first time for centuries. What seems to follow from this is that the TGIE's allegations of population reduction due to Chinese rule probably have some validity for the 1950s but are greatly exaggerated. However, since the 1960s, Chinese rule has had the effect of increasing the population of the Tibetans, not decreasing it, largely due to a modernization process that has improved the standard of living and lowered infant, maternity and other mortality rates.⁷⁰ Tibetans have been exempt from China's one-child policy, which came into force at the beginning of the 1980s, and in rural Tibet no formal restrictions apply even at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, other Tibetans have been subject to some restrictions, and since the 1990s authorities encourage limitations even in rural Tibet.

Mention has already been made of the issue of Han migration into Tibetan areas. This has caused great controversy, and even been a main factor leading the Dalai Lama to accuse the Chinese of "cultural genocide". However, a closer examination of the figures suggests that Han migration into Tibetan areas differs very greatly depending on whether we are discussing Tibet itself or the Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan, and whether we are discussing the main towns or rural areas. We also need to keep in mind how much migration is state-driven and how much voluntary.

Table 2 shows the number and proportion of Tibetans and Han in the TAR according to the 1990 and 2000 censuses. Although the Han have grown in actual number they are still quite a low proportion of the total population. According to the Hong Kong based political scientist Barry Sautman, the 1990 census counted all those who had lived in the TAR for at least a year, whereas the 2000 census reduced the necessary minimum residence to six months.⁷¹

⁶⁹ See, People's Republic of China, State Statistical Bureau, Population Statistics Section (comp.), *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian; Chinese Population Statistics Yearbook 1988*, Beijing: Chinese Zhanwang Press, 1988, p. 273 for the 1953 census. For the 1964, 1982 and 1990 censuses, see, People's Republic of China, State Statistical Bureau, Population Statistics Section (comp.), *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian; Chinese Population Statistics Yearbook 1990*, Beijing: Science and Technology Documentation Press, 1991, pp. 12, 56-7; and for the 2000 census People's Republic of China, National Bureau of Statistics (comp.), *Zhongguo tongji nianjian; China Statistical Yearbook 2002*, Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2002, p. 97

⁷⁰ See also the comments of Yan Hao, Tibetan Population in China: Myths and Facts Re-examined, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 2000, pp. 19-26

⁷¹ Sautman, B., 'Cultural Genocide' and Tibet, *Texas International Law Journal*, Vol. 38, 2003, p. 200

Given the fact that many Han in Tibet are “floaters” anxious to make a quick profit before returning home, this would make the rise in proportion less significant than it might at first appear.

Table 2: TAR Population According to the 1990 and 2000 Censuses⁷²

Census	Tibetans	% Tibetans	Han	% Han
1990	2,096,346	95.48	81,217	3.68
2000	2,411,100	92.20	155,300	5.90

According to a Chinese source, the proportion of Han living in Tibet on a long-term basis reached a peak of 6.6 per cent in 1980 (122,356 persons) and then began to decline, the reason being that the families of many Han returned to their homes further east from the second half of 1980,⁷³ presumably following Hu Yaobang’s visit in May. These were mostly cadres and government workers sent to Tibet to participate in economic development there, and of course to further the PRC’s political control. In the 1990s and since, there has been another upsurge of Han immigration, as we can see from the figures. There are still Han military, who are not counted in the census, and various other Han government employees. However, since the 1990s, the balance of Han immigrants has shifted to entrepreneurs or others keen to take advantage of the economic opportunities that derived from the newly invigorated policies of economic development.⁷⁴

One of the implications of this is that many Han immigrants, possibly even most, do not stay in Tibet long. They may even stay too short a period to be counted in the census figures. That means that there are probably far more Han than the census shows. According to one journalist, some critics have put the number of this floating population as high as hundreds of thousands.⁷⁵ However, it is impossible to know the real scale of this immigration. Impressionistic evidence from several visits to Lhasa over nearly two decades suggests that it has grown significantly in recent years. Certainly, Tibetans have been complaining about it to foreigners for a long time. On the other hand, as Sautman suggests, in some major respects the “temporary” Han in the TAR are no different from most of China’s floating population in other parts of the country.⁷⁶ One other factor is important. Almost all Han immigrants go to the big cities, especially Lhasa. The United States Department of State’s 2003 report on human rights in China acknowledges that there are virtually no Han in Tibet outside the cities. It states that official (Chinese) estimates put the number of Han in Lhasa at some 100,000 out of a total population of 409,500, though some observers estimated the Han population in Lhasa as high as half the total population.⁷⁷

⁷² People’s Republic of China, State Statistical Bureau, Population Statistics Section (comp.), *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian 1990*, p. 78; Yan Hao, p. 30; *Renmin ribao -People’s Daily*, 3 April 2001, p. 1.

⁷³ Liu Rui *et al.*, *Zhongguo renkou, Xizang fence* [China’s Population, Tibet Volume], Beijing: China Finance and Economics Press, 1988, p. 283

⁷⁴ See also Iredale, R. *et al.*, *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education and Ethnicity in China*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001, especially pp. 157-8

⁷⁵ Kwan, p. 8

⁷⁶ Sautman, ‘Cultural Genocide’ ...

⁷⁷ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*, Washington, February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27768.htm#Tibet> [accessed January 2005]

The following table shows the proportions of the Han population in some autonomous prefectures outside the TAR that include significant numbers of Tibetans. Two years are given for comparison, 1990 and 1999. It is obvious that while the number of Han rose slightly over those years, their proportion in relation to the whole population in these autonomous prefectures actually fell. Moreover, the difference between the approximately 1.25 million in these figures and the 7.5 million frequently cited in Tibetan émigré sources is so vast as to demand explanation.

Table 3: Han Populations in Tibetan Areas Outside the TAR, 1990 and 1999⁷⁸

Autonomous Prefecture	Province	No of Han 1990	% of Han 1990	No of Han 1999	% of Han 1999
Haibei Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	119,000	46.12	99,800	38.88
Huangnan Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	20,000	10.99	15,900	7.95
Hainan Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	136,000	37.67	130,900	33.96
Golog Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	12,000	10.00	10,800	9.08
Yushu Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	8,600	3.08	10,000	3.92
Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan A.P.	Qinghai	237,000	75.96	243,600	74.61
Aba Tibetan and Qiang A.P.	Sichuan	218,800	28.6	228,000	26.72
Ganzi Tibetan A.P.	Sichuan	162,000	19.5	162,000	18.49
Diqing Tibetan A.P.	Yunnan	51,000	16.2	50,000	15.06
Gannan Tibetan A.P.	Gansu	266,700	45.9	316,700	47.87
Total	All four	1,231,100	31.14	1,255,700	29.62

One reason for the difference is that the TGIE has a very different concept of what is included in Tibet. The TGIE claims as part of Tibet not only the autonomous prefectures of Qinghai, but the whole province.⁷⁹ As it happens, by far the most populous part of the province is the capital Xining and its surrounding areas in Haidong. Approximately 3.5 million of the province's 5 million people live in this eastern extremity of Qinghai, and they are overwhelmingly Han. One might add that this region has been dominantly or overwhelmingly Han for centuries and it seems far-fetched to claim that the Tibetan nation and identity are being submerged because most of the people there are Han.

Even allowing for the fact that the TGIE includes different areas for Tibet from the Chinese government, the discrepancy between Chinese and TGIE figures is substantial, about 5 million to 7.5 million. There may be Han short-term immigrants in the Tibetan areas outside the TAR itself, but they do not go very far towards explaining the difference. Whose figures should we believe? It would appear likely that both sides are guilty of a degree of political opportunism. Nevertheless, the Chinese are in a much better position to calculate than the TGIE, and it should probably be concluded that the TGIE figures are greatly exaggerated.

Overall, what follows from the above is that there is very little permanent Han migration into the TAR itself, apart from Lhasa. There was some state-driven Han migration of cadres into

⁷⁸ The 1990 figures are based on Yan Hao, p. 30; for the 1999 figures see People's Republic of China, State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Economic and Development Department & State Statistical Bureau, Department of Integrated Statistics (comp.), *Zhongguo minzu tongji nianjian; China's Ethnic Statistical Yearbook 2000*, Beijing: Ethnic Publishing House, 2000, pp. 416-18

⁷⁹ See, for instance, the map in Barnett (ed.), *Resistance and Reform...*, pp. xvi, xvii

Tibet and other Tibetan areas until the 1980s, and a great deal of short-term Han migration to Lhasa in the 1990s, most of it voluntary and aimed at economic profit. Tibetans remain in the majority in most of the Tibetan areas outside Tibet, if one accepts the Chinese definition of what constitutes the Tibetan areas and that the number of Han immigrants there actually fell in the 1990s. If we accept the TGIE's claim for the territories that constitute Tibet then the number of Han rises greatly, because it includes the eastern segment of Qinghai, where most of the province's people live. Overall, however, it is difficult to accept the Tibetan diaspora claims the PRC has attempted to dilute the Tibetan nation through Han immigration to the extent of it amounting to "cultural genocide".

3 Human Rights

Many of the issues discussed above involve human rights. These include policy towards ethnic minorities, Tibetan Buddhism and the migration of Han people into Tibet. However, it is appropriate also to take up some issues of human rights under a special heading. This is especially because the situation in Tibet is one of the most persistent and important areas arousing the concern of governments and peoples around the world where the abuse of human rights in China is concerned.

3.1 Overview

The PRC has been the target of criticism on human rights abuse grounds for decades. However, the Chinese reaction to the disturbances of 1987 to 1989 in Tibet were a landmark intensifying the concern, as was the suppression of the student movement in Beijing in June 1989. Both events have remained very important among human rights activists since that time.

In November 1991, China began its human rights diplomacy by issuing a white paper on the subject.⁸⁰ This document took the communitarian view of human rights that the welfare of the majority matters more than the individual rights of the few. It emphasized several points of relevance to the present discussion. It claimed the right to subsistence as "the most important of all human rights, without which the other rights are out of the question" and, while seeing "much room for improvement", painted a generally rosy view of developments in the PRC to that time, especially during the reform period since the late 1970s. Another point the document stressed was to affirm the role of each sovereign state in determining its laws relevant to human rights and to criticize "any country making use of the issue of human rights to sell its own values, ideology, political standards and mode of development" and "any country interfering in the internal affairs of other countries on the pretext of human rights". On ethnic minorities and Tibet, the document emphasized the laws stipulating ethnic equality and prohibiting discrimination, as well as the significant economic development in Tibet under the CCP, with the consequent improvement in the basic human right of subsistence. And it gives credit to the PRC for abolishing the old serf system and implementing democratic reforms: "the serfs shook off their chains, and are no longer serf-owners' private property that can be bought, sold, transferred, bartered or used to clear a debt", as they had been in the past.

As noted earlier, PRC laws do defend such concepts as religious freedom and ethnic equality. In Article 35, the 1982 Constitution gives all PRC citizens "freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration". It also states in Article 51

⁸⁰ People's Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, Human Rights in China, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 34, No. 44, 4-10 November 1991

that the exercise of freedoms “may not infringe upon the interests of the State” and enjoins the State to maintain public security and suppress “activities jeopardizing state security” (Article 28 as amended 1999).⁸¹ Since the late 1980s, however, all PRC leaders have been extremely strongly concerned with political and social stability, and as a result very sensitive to what they perceive as foreign interference in their domestic affairs. In their eyes, the main, but certainly not the only, offender is the United States, where many both in government and outside have taken a keen interest in the Tibetan areas and China’s human rights record there. Every year since 1989, except 1991, 1998, 2002 and 2003, the United States has sponsored or supported a resolution in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, criticizing China for its human rights practices. Every year the Commission has voted to take “no action”. The largest majority in favour of the “no-action” resolution down to the beginning of 2005 was in April 2004, when 28 members voted for the resolution and 16 against, with 9 abstentions. The obsession with instability, together with the conviction that Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory, has brought about an iron determination that nobody should be allowed to do anything that could possibly lead to separating Tibet from China. At the same time, the Chinese legal system, although gaining in strength since the late 1970s, is still very weak by comparison with the CCP-dominated Chinese state.

It is not the laws that are at fault so much as their implementation. In this paper quite a few examples have been cited illustrating this point. Apart from those in the previous paragraph, others include the laws on religion and freedom to believe in and practise religions (p 16), and the Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities of 1984, especially as amended in February 2001 (pp. 7, 14). Although these laws are generally supportive of concepts relating to human rights, the references to them in this paper should suggest that none is implemented with the vigour necessary to ensure they are strictly observed.

3.1.1 Legal Procedure

Legal procedure in Tibet follows models found in other parts of China, with the Tibetan judiciary being subject to constraints similar to those familiar elsewhere. The main one is that, although in theory everybody is subject to law, CCP power can sometimes override the law in cases where state security is involved. There are, however, several areas in which the 1984 Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities and its 2001 amendment gave certain privileges to ethnic areas in the field of law. Judges and other legal personnel are included in the 2001 amendment’s affirmative action provision for ethnic minorities in government employment, which means that in the Tibetan areas, Tibetans enjoy preference in becoming legal workers. The Nationality Law of 1984 (Article 46) “guarantees the citizens of every nationality the right to use their own nationality spoken and written language in carrying out litigation”. Translations should be provided for participants who do not know the relevant language.⁸²

However, in its 2003 report on human rights in Tibet, the United States Department of State commented that most judges in Tibet “had little or no legal training”. Although it did give the Chinese authorities some credit for trying to improve this situation, it regarded legal safeguards as inadequate both in design and implementation. Trials involving state security are cursory and closed.⁸³ What is most worrying is that in cases when the Chinese state has

⁸¹ People’s Republic of China, Constitution, pp. 7, 9, 24

⁸² People’s Republic of China, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo falü huibian, 1979-1984 (Compilation of PRC Laws, 1979-1984)*, Beijing: People’s Press, 1985, p. 549. See also Sorensen and Phillips, *Legal Standards...*, p. 25

⁸³ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports...*

any doubts about whether its own security is under threat, it will take the hard line against suspects, considering it preferable to punish an innocent person to letting a guilty one get away. Constitutional guarantees of freedoms of the press, of assembly and of demonstrations have not meant much in the absence of an adequate legal system, but the slightest hint of danger to the State renders them totally meaningless. Of course it is always the State itself that determines when it is under threat. Therefore, although China denies holding any political prisoners, there are in fact many that a typical Western country would regard as such.

3.1.2 Political Prisoners

A Tibet Information Network (TIN) special report from early 2004 claimed that the number of Tibetan political prisoners had reached a peak of about 800 in 1996, falling greatly from 1997 to 2001 and slightly in 2002, with the decline halting in 2003 to yield a total of 145 in January 2004. Among these, 136 were male and 9 female; 90 (62% of the total) were in the TAR, 46 (32%) in Sichuan, 7 (5%) in Qinghai or Gansu, and for the remaining 2 (1%) no information was available. The biggest falls were in the TAR itself due to prisoners' completing their terms or being otherwise released and the numbers of new prisoners being small. On the other hand, there was a sharp increase in Sichuan in 2002 due to detentions associated with the case against Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche and Lobsang Dondup.⁸⁴

3.1.3 Prison Conditions

There are prisons at provincial, prefectural and county level, the most notorious being the TAR Prison, usually called after the place it is located Drapchi, which is near the centre of Lhasa. Prison conditions in Tibetan areas, especially in the TAR itself, are bad enough in themselves to constitute human rights abuse. There are many accounts by people who have actually suffered detention in one of these prisons. One Western activist has the following to say, referring specifically to political prisoners or people the Chinese authorities would describe as "splittists" or "separatists". It is representative of many similar comments.

Many Tibetan detainees face torture, beating, and degrading treatment during interrogation; unfair trials and sometimes detention without any trial whatsoever; punishment in prison, including long periods in isolation or years added to their sentences, especially if they try to protest the treatment of other prisoners; and illness and sometimes death from poor treatment and substandard prison conditions.⁸⁵

In May 2000 a report issued by the United Nations Committee Against Torture expressed concern about continuing allegations of serious incidents of torture involving Tibetans.⁸⁶ TIN claimed early in 2004 that it had confirmed information on 41 Tibetan political prisoners who had died of abuse, the incidence being highest in the mid to late 1990s, with a peak in 1998.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Tibet Information Network, *Current Trends in Tibetan Political Imprisonment: Increase in Sichuan, Decline in Qinghai and Gansu*, London, 6 February 2004, <http://www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/2004/0602.htm> [accessed January 2005]. On the specific case, see further below.

⁸⁵ Marshall, S., Prisons in Tibet, in Harris and Jones (eds.), p. 145

⁸⁶ United Nations, Committee Against Torture, Summary Record of the 416th Meeting..., CAT/C/SR.416, 18 May 2000, para 35

⁸⁷ Tibet Information Network, *Current Trends...*

3.1.4 Freedom of Movement

Although still quite difficult, travel with government approval is very much easier for Tibetans than it used to be. In September 2003, TAR Public Security Bureau officials gave a visiting foreign delegation the figure of 1,000 for TAR residents receiving passports annually, with 2,000 to 3,000 making overseas visits each year. Tibetans often find difficulty in gaining visas to enter India because of sensitivities in Sino-Indian relations due to Tibetan issues. However, many Tibetans visit India via third countries, returning after temporary stays.⁸⁸

3.2 Groups at Risk

3.2.1 Political Dissidents

The main group at risk in the Tibetan areas is active political dissidents, especially those seeking Tibetan independence. Activities attracting prison terms are those classified as endangering state security or promoting separatism, but they range from espionage and even bomb blasts through distributing leaflets advocating independence to possessing the Dalai Lama's picture or reading the Dalai Lama's works. Among the dissidents the majority belong to the clerical order. Of the 136 men TIN claimed as political prisoners in January 2004, two thirds were monks, former monks and incarnate lamas, while six of the nine women were nuns, and one was the mother of the Dalai Lama's choice as the Panchen Lama.⁸⁹ Nuns have always been much fewer than monks and traditionally taken a much lower status in the Buddhist clergy than monks. However, in the current age nuns have become politically active and played an active role in opposing Chinese rule.⁹⁰ This is apparently a point on which both independence activists and Chinese authorities agree, although the former regard it as a point of pride, whereas the Chinese see it as a reason for deep suspicion of nuns. Nuns are highlighted here only because they are less often mentioned than monks in regard to anti-Chinese Tibetan political dissidence. Actually, as we see from the figures of political prisoners, monks are both more numerous and prominent as members of a group at risk. There have been numerous cases of monks imprisoned or otherwise subject to human rights abuse for actions related to political activism. The following case serves as a single example.

In December 2002, the senior Tibetan lama Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche and a younger monk, Lobsang Dondup, were tried secretly in a Sichuan court for crimes of separatism and of perpetrating several bomb blasts that had taken place over the previous two years or so. Both were monks at Litang Monastery in western Sichuan. Both pleaded not guilty, but were sentenced to death, Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche with a two-year reprieve that could be changed into a life sentence. Both appealed their convictions. On 26 January 2003, the Sichuan Higher People's Court confirmed the death sentence on both, with Lobsang Dondup being executed the same day. A number of others were arrested in connection with the case, for example for providing information to foreigners about the investigation of the bombings that had led to the trials, some being released quite soon after the convictions were confirmed. With the expiry of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche's two-year reprieve on 26 January 2005, the court the same day commuted the death sentence against him to life imprisonment.

There was – and still is – an international outcry against the secrecy of the trial, against the charges and of course against the sentences, only slightly mitigated by the senior lama's

⁸⁸ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports...*

⁸⁹ Tibet Information Network, *Current Trends...*

⁹⁰ See Havnevik, H., The Role of Nuns in Contemporary Tibet, in Barnett (ed.), *Resistance and Reform*, pp. 259-66.

sentence being commuted from death to life imprisonment. Chinese officials claimed that Lobang Dondup actually implicated Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche in the crimes and that they had handwriting and explosives materials pointing to Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche's guilt; and also averred that both had confessed. However, many people have regarded the trial as a travesty of justice and the accusations as unlikely. In particular, Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche has a generally excellent reputation as a teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, as a holy and non-violent man and an advocate of socially and environmentally responsible behaviour. According to TIN, Tenzin Deleg secretly recorded a cassette tape in which he claimed that the Chinese authorities had scapegoated him by linking him to Lobsang Dondrup, who had once been a monk in one of his monasteries, until he had expelled the younger man for misbehaviour in business matters.⁹¹

3.2.2 Refugees

Another group at risk, though much less numerous and important, is refugees who leave or attempt to leave Tibet without government permission. Chinese authorities catch many of them before they escape, but others get through. Some return, usually through compulsion but occasionally voluntarily.

A very high-profile case was a group of 18 Tibetans, including three children, who fled to Nepal in 2003, planning to go on to India. On 17 April the Nepali Immigration Department, having given the children into the custody of the office of UNHCR, charged and imprisoned the others for terms ranging from three to ten months in lieu of a fine they could not pay. The Tibetan Refugee Centre in the Nepali capital Kathmandu paid the fine for them and requested they be released and given to UNHCR, which would normally have allowed them to proceed to India.⁹² Instead, despite protests from UNHCR and others, the Nepali Immigration Department handed them over to officials of the Chinese Embassy at the end of May and they were taken back to Tibet and detained. According to Chinese officials, 14 were released soon after returning, 2 stayed at the border for medical reasons and 2 were detained on suspicion of criminal behaviour though no charges were ever laid; all were released by the end of the year. However, NGO reports painted a somewhat different picture. They said that up to 7 of the Tibetans were kept in detention until at least November. More seriously, they claimed the detainees were subjected to severe torture, with the group's monks suffering more beating than the others.⁹³

At the end of January 2005 the Nepali government suddenly closed down the Dalai Lama's office in Kathmandu and removed recognition of the Tibetan Refugee Centre there. On 1 February the Nepali King Gyanendra dismissed his own prime minister's government for the second time in just over two years and took over full control of affairs, charging it with failure to control an insurgency that had killed over 10,000 people. India reacted to the coup with horror, but China declined to comment, saying that this was Nepal's internal affair. There is no doubt that China had long been unhappy at the existence of the Tibetan office and recognition of the refugee centre in Kathmandu and it is likely that China had exerted pressure on the King. The closure of the office, derecognition of the Centre and the coup all

⁹¹ Tibet Information Network, *Current Trends...*

⁹² Human Rights Watch, *Nepal Endangers Tibetans with Efforts to Force Return to China*, New York, 30 May 2003 (press release), <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/nepal053003.htm> [accessed January 2005]

⁹³ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports...*

represent an increase of Chinese influence in Nepal at India's expense and are against the interests of refugees from Tibet.⁹⁴

3.2.3 Women

One particularly vulnerable category is women who are forced to undergo abortion or sterilization after giving birth to more children than what is allowed under China's family planning policy. The TGIE and bodies sympathetic to it have frequently made allegations of forced abortions and sterilizations in China. One instance is a report by the Tibet Support Group, which claims first-hand reports by refugees of abortions, including the second child of a Tibetan doctor, Tashi Drolma. She was a refugee of the late 1980s or early 1990s among a group of four Tibetan doctors in a Qinghai hospital who lost their jobs in obstetrics due to their protests against the government's birth control policies.⁹⁵ While not doubting the specifics of this particular case, one should also note a somewhat different, albeit later, view from an academic team led by American Tibet specialist Melvyn Goldstein that carried out a survey in rural Tibet from November 1997 to August 2000. They found no evidence of widespread forced abortions or sterilizations and concluded that "there is no general program of forced birth control in rural Tibet". They also warned against using refugee reports and anecdotal evidence to interpret highly politicized situations.⁹⁶

There may well still be forced abortions. However, it is important to bear in mind that Tibetans are exempt from the one-child-per-couple policy. Moreover, research by Goldstein and others suggests that younger Tibetan women at the turn of the twentieth century tend strongly to want fewer children than was normal in the past and "a shift to lower fertility may already be in progress".⁹⁷ It is likely, therefore, that the number of forced abortions has dropped significantly since the time of Tashi Drolma's claim.

3.3 Role of NGOs/IGOs

International NGOs and IGOs have played a role in Tibet since the early 1980s. Particular NGOs to work in Tibet include the International Red Cross, the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Save the Children Fund. One of the most active and specifically aimed at Tibet is the United States-based Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund (TPAF), the mission of which states that it "selects projects in areas where needs are found to be greatest. They are designed to benefit rural poor and urban unemployed Tibetan populations, and to demonstrate how Tibet's public services can be strengthened to improve Tibetan livelihoods and welfare".⁹⁸ Another NGO of interest is Médecins sans Frontières, which withdrew at the end of 2002 after 14 years of working with Tibetans on humanitarian and medical assistance projects. Its Tibetan staff transferred to other NGOs, with for example its water sanitation project being continued by the Save the Children Fund. Médecins sans Frontières' Director of Operations in Brussels,

⁹⁴ Devraj, R., Out Comes the China Card, *AsiaTimes Online*, 5 February 2005, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GB05Df09.html [accessed February 2005]

⁹⁵ Tibet Support Group UK, *Birth Control Policies in Tibet*, London, n.d., <http://www.tibet.org/Activism/Rights/birthcontrol.html> [accessed January 2005]

⁹⁶ Goldstein, M.C. *et al.*, Fertility and Family Planning in Rural Tibet, *The China Journal*, No. 47, January 2002, pp. 24-5, 39

⁹⁷ *Idem*, p. 37

⁹⁸ Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund, *Our Mission*, Cambridge MA, n.d., <http://www.tpaf.org/TPAFpurpose.htm> [accessed January 2005]

Christopher Stokes, said that the reasons for the withdrawal were mainly operational. “We’re aiming to shift our focus to treatment for people with HIV/AIDS in China”, he said.⁹⁹ However, the NGO has been noted for activism and there were no doubt political factors as well.

The Chinese government’s attitude towards NGOs working in Tibet has been ambivalent. On the one hand, authorities welcome NGO assistance in humanitarian and development projects, but on the other they are distrustful of the influence of the TGIE and Tibet lobbyists in the West on many participants in NGO projects, Médecins sans Frontières being but one example among many. However, in June 2002, the Chinese government and the TAR government held their first-ever symposium on international development aid for Tibet. TAR government representative Ju Jianhua said that, following China’s accession to the World Trade Organization the preceding December, “we welcome all international organizations and international NGOs to come to Tibet and help us in the modernization of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)”.¹⁰⁰

Despite this apparently very broad approach, the Chinese authorities have no intention of allowing the Dalai Lama to use NGO projects to promote his own cause, if they can avoid it. Some of the Tibet lobby groups could themselves be considered NGOs, and with their anti-China aims are unlikely to be welcomed by officials in Tibet, though some of their individual members may be able to participate, representing other bodies. There have been complaints by NGO representatives of difficulties in obtaining visas to enter the country or go to the places they need to work. On the other hand, it is quite possible to make a good contribution, but still keep out of politics. Dr. Arthur Holcombe, head of the TPAF, commented that “when you come to Tibet you have to be apolitical”, but went on to praise the role of NGOs by claiming “your aid can be very effective because you can directly help those Tibetan people and Tibetan communities in need”. The TPAF has been putting US\$ 360,000 to US\$ 400,000 every year since 1998 into projects promoting vocational education, health, micro financing and clean water.¹⁰¹

One prominent example showing the tensions between politics and aid was a request the Chinese made for World Bank funding to assist its Western Poverty Reduction Project, which included Tibetan areas. In June 1999 the World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved US\$ 160 million, which was just over half the cost of the project. However, because of opposition from the United States and Germany, the Board laid down the condition that it be allowed to review the plans for one component of the project on the grounds that it involved a resettlement programme that Tibet lobbyists in the West believed would harm the interests of the local Tibetans and damage the environment. In May the following year a World Bank inspection panel criticized a proposed loan of US\$ 40 million designed to relocate some rural Han families to a Tibetan and Mongolian region in Qinghai, on the grounds that it would encourage Han immigration and undermine Tibetan and Mongolian culture. Although World Bank President James Wolfensohn supported the relocation project, arguing that the problems raised could be solved, the Board of Executive Directors demanded a further review based on conditions concerned with human rights and the environment. On 7 July 2000, the Chinese

⁹⁹ Tibet Information Network, Médecins Sans Frontières to Leave Tibet, 16 December 2002, <http://www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/2002/1612.htm>, [accessed January 2005]

¹⁰⁰ Agence France-Presse, China Welcomes NGOs to Help in Development of Tibet, 26 June 2002, http://www.tpaf.org/AgenceFrancePress_062602.htm [accessed 28 December 2004]

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Executive Director Zhu Xian announced that China rejected the conditions but that the project would go ahead anyway, with China using its own resources.¹⁰² It is undoubtedly the case that both NGOs and IGOs have, by and large, played a very positive role in Tibet. In many cases NGO and IGO reports from or about Tibet are more credible than either official Chinese government or TGIE sources and therefore play a positive role in conveying information about what is going on. However, in the particular case of the Western Poverty Reduction Project, it seems likely that World Bank and hence international participation in the Qinghai segment would actually have helped the Tibetan community the Tibet lobbyists were concerned about, and that their action in preventing international participation was therefore counter-productive.

3.4 Human Rights Trends

Human rights trends have tended to follow politics, but independence movements by the Tibetans have also brought about reactions from the Chinese that have affected human rights. Another and related factor influencing human rights trends is the situation regarding the legal system in China generally and in Tibet in particular. The 1982 Constitution does actually say that the law courts should operate independently and “are not subject to interference by administrative organs, public organizations or individuals” (Article 126), though this provision is frequently breached, especially in cases involving national security.¹⁰³ It is possible that international pressure makes some difference to human rights, though it is debatable whether it is a major factor in most instances.

Human rights in Tibet improved in the early to mid-1980s, but declined later in the decade. Of course, the demonstrations of 1987 to 1989 were a major factor in the change, but we need to mention here the use of the people’s armed police. This was a special paramilitary security force established in 1984 for the specific purpose of dealing with internal disturbances, following a reorganization of the People’s Liberation Army. From the time units of this force arrived in Lhasa early in 1988, they gained a dreadful reputation among Tibetans, especially for their role in the killing of monks and demonstrators during the Monlam riot of 5 March 1988.¹⁰⁴

The 1990s saw an improvement by comparison with the late 1980s and the period of martial law. Yet, as CCP secretary, Chen Kuiyuan was definitely much keener to maintain Chinese rule and develop the Tibetan economy in ways he thought would secure that objective than to satisfy what he regarded as Western notions of human rights. In his view banning pictures of the Dalai Lama in certain contexts and conducting patriotic education campaigns were not human rights abuses. Yet in the context of Tibet, they certainly appear to many to infringe religious liberty and consequently violate human rights.

The early years of the twenty-first century under CCP Secretary Guo Jinling appear to have seen improvements in human rights. In mid-2002, TIN reported that in the previous few months the Chinese authorities had released six political prisoners and four nuns before their scheduled time. The longest standing of them was Tanag Jigme Zangpo, who had spent most of the last 40 years in jail and was released 8 years ahead of time. Claiming that the release

¹⁰² For some discussion on this matter see Mackerras, *China’s Ethnic Minorities...* pp. 164-5

¹⁰³ People’s Republic of China, Constitution, p. 20

¹⁰⁴ See Schwartz, R.D., *Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising*, London: Hurst, 1994, pp. 79-86

was due to international pressure, TIN noted that it was “unprecedented for China to release such a long-serving Tibetan political prisoner”, especially since he was immediately allowed to go to the United States.¹⁰⁵ The figures for political prisoners given above suggest strongly an improved situation in the TAR. The US Department of State acknowledged that restrictions on religious freedom in the TAR were “somewhat less oppressive for lay followers” in 2003 than in previous years and that “conditions generally were less restrictive in Tibetan areas outside of the TAR”.¹⁰⁶

Most observers have expected that Hu Jintao’s ascendancy to power, with his experience in Tibet and his less draconian style, will benefit the cause of human rights in Tibet, especially with the continuing high-level TGIE visits to China. However, it is too early to be sure about this. The end of 2004 saw some unfortunate attacks against influential intellectuals in China, casting doubt on Hu’s reputation as slightly more liberal than his predecessor Jiang Zemin.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, one of his close personal associates, Yang Chuantang, became CCP secretary in Tibet. Concrete details of policy remain unclear, but it is likely that the Chinese obsession with security will remain in place, which means that the human rights situation will not change to any great extent in the short term.

4 Conclusions and Outlook

We can sum up the overall situation in Tibet early in the twenty-first century as follows:

- The territory is more firmly integrated into China than ever before.
- There is a modernization process underway. The economy is becoming stronger and the standard of living rising for the great majority of the people, although disparities are also widening and the cities are benefiting much more from economic growth than the countryside.
- Tibetan Buddhism and culture in general remain strong and are in no immediate danger. However, they are weaker than they used to be, more as a natural result of modernization than from active Chinese attempts to suppress them.
- The human rights situation remains poor, because the Chinese state is excessively focused on territorial unity and separatism. Although it has some cause to see the monasteries as the main centres for anti-Chinese activities, it is far too prone to take the hard line in individual cases and to influence the law courts in favour of severe and unfair decisions without adequate evidence or proper legal proceedings.

The outlook for the next decade or so depends largely on what happens in China as a whole. Specialists are not in agreement on this matter, seeing futures ranging from the total collapse of the Chinese state to it becoming a candidate for status as a superpower that will rival the United States economically and strategically by the middle of the twenty-first century. And there is also the possibility that democratic forces will strengthen in China in the coming decade. It is doubtful whether Hu Jintao will introduce the kind of drastic political reform that many in the West want to see in China, but he is unlikely to suspend the general trend towards a fairer law system that has been developing, albeit in fits and starts, since the 1980s. Another important and highly complex imponderable is the question of Taiwanese

¹⁰⁵ Tibet Information Network, Longest Serving Political Prisoner Arrives in US, 13 July 2002, <http://www.tibetinfo.co.uk/news-updates/2002/1407.htm> [accessed 16 July 2002]

¹⁰⁶ United States, Department of State, *Country Reports...*

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. Marquand, R., China ‘Grey Lists’ Its Intellectuals, *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 November 2004

independence, which could lead on to an outbreak of war between the United States and China. The following comments about Tibet assume no Chinese collapse, no Sino-American war and a continuing Chinese economic and strategic rise.

Tibet is unlikely to secede from China over the next decade. The signs observable both in Tibet itself and in printed sources are that more and more people prefer the relative prosperity of Chinese rule to the death and destruction a real separatist war would bring. This is especially the case since the potential for victory against the Chinese state is small, except in the highly unlikely event of military intervention from a major power such as the United States. Tibetans can still practise their religion and follow other aspects of their own culture, as long as they do not move into anti-Chinese politics.

Tibetan culture may continue to weaken in some ways under the pressures of modernization. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that it will die out in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, globalization often has the effect of reviving local cultures rather than weakening them, because many people do not want their identity to sink into a big indefinable mass. We already see both trends in operation in today's Tibetan areas. In terms of the arts and entertainment, many young Tibetans, especially in the main cities, already prefer the globalized urban culture to the Tibetan tradition. The present author has watched young Tibetans in Shigatse, especially men, play computer games that are much the same as elsewhere not only in China but the world. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhism remains very strong and first-hand observations in Tibet since 1985 suggest it is actually becoming more influential socially, rather than less.

As for human rights, the general trend over the next decade should be improvement. If the economy gets stronger and the Tibetan areas become more integrated within China, there is a chance that the Chinese state will become confident enough about its hold on Tibet to give up at least part of its obsession about separatism. At the same time, as China becomes more globalized, its law system could move further in the direction of openness, with even a degree of independence from the state.

Will China reach an accommodation with the Dalai Lama over the next decade or so? It seems likely that, if it does so, this will be on the terms of the Chinese leadership. Their position is actually stronger now *vis-à-vis* the Dalai Lama than it was in the early 1990s. They can afford to wait more than he can. It is not out of the question that he will return to Tibet, and the Chinese may make minor concessions in terms of autonomy. They could, for instance, give him a position of significant influence in the government. However, it is most unlikely they would make major concessions such as withdrawing the CCP or the Chinese military or police from Tibet.

Tibet looks set to remain within China, at least for the next decade and probably beyond. Of course this will not be universally welcomed, since it will mean an increase of Chinese influence. However, if the Tibetan areas continue to become more modern and prosperous, with Tibetan culture surviving and Buddhism remaining strong, then such a development may be acceptable to quite a few people, including many Tibetans.

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