CHINA'S TIBET POLICY

BY

DAWA NORBU

REVIEW ARTICLE

BY

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A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF PROGRAMS

ON

RADIO FREE ASIA

TIBETAN SERVICE

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Dawa Norbu was for many years the editor of *Tibetan Review*. He received a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley and was, until his death in 2006, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Tibetan history and politics.

Although many of the chapters of *China's Tibet Policy* have previously been published as articles, some are entirely new. All previously published chapters have been revised and updated, and they collectively embody many of Dawa Norbu's most unique insights into Sino-Tibetan relations. Dawa Norbu's numerous writings have not previously been collected together in one work, nor have his works and insights been so well summarized by the author himself.

Dawa Norbu describes his latest and most ambitious work as "an open-minded inquiry into the Tibet Question from the earliest beginnings of Sino-Tibetan relationships to the latest manifestations of the Communist power, policy and practice in occupied Tibet." He declares that he has written his book in "a spirit of dialogue, discussion and debate, in which I have been engaged for a long time." The goal of objectivity may seem unattainable, given an issue that the author recognizes is one of the world's most polarized and polemicized, and the fact that as a Tibetan he cannot entirely transcend his subjectivity, but he achieves his goal to a remarkable extent. *China's Tibet Policy* is characterized by its unique insights into the intricacies of Sino-Tibetan relations and its comprehensive analysis of the current political situation. Dawa Norbu's book is an important contribution to Tibetan scholarship and essential reading on Tibetan history and Sino-Tibetan cultural and political relations.

China's Tibet Policy is divided into five parts. Part 1, "Patterns of the Sino-Tibetan Past and Current Political Realities," is a summary of Sino-Tibetan relations from the earliest times to the present. Chapter titles are: "The Origins of Tribute Relations and the Buddhist Factor in Sino-Barbarian Relations," "The Warrior Kings of Tibet (624-842) and Tang China (617-756)," "The Song Dynasty (960-1126) and the Buddhist Revolution in Tibet (842-1247)," "The Mongol Empire (1207-1368) and the Sakya Lamas (1244-1358)," "The Confucian Restoration in Ming China (1368-1662) and the Re-feudalization of Post-Sakya Tibet (1337-1565)," "The Manchu Empire (1662-1912) and the Gelugpa Hegemony (1642-1950)," "The Rise of the Han Nation and the End of Indirect Rule," and "The Anatomy of Tibetan Autonomy."

At eight chapters and more than 100 pages this section is more than one-quarter of the book. However, as valuable as it is as a summary of the author's insights, the introductory section is not the most valuable part of the book. Each of the remaining four

parts is composed of three chapters. The section titles are: “China and Tibet in War and Peace,” “Tibet in Communist China,” “Tibet in International Politics,” and “Tibet’s Future.” Each chapter is a detailed analysis of one particular aspect of Tibetan history and Sino-Tibetan relations.

In his Introduction, Dawa Norbu sets the stage for his inquiry by describing his methods and mentioning some of his most important findings. He says that he has adopted a social science approach in order to transcend the political positions of both sides in the Sino-Tibetan dispute. Describing pre-modern Sino-Tibetan relations as a special type of tribute relations, the author says that the difference lay in the role of Buddhism and in the fact that Tibet was not a Confucian culture. China’s relations with Tibet were on a higher level than typical tribute relations with Confucian countries. “The high-level state receptions accorded to and the deep respect, if not veneration, with which the High Lamas of Tibet were received by successive Chinese emperors in Beijing were not extended even to the Confucian monarchs of Korea, Vietnam and Japan.” Nevertheless, many of the Confucian societies that historically engaged in tribute relations with China have graduated to independence while Tibet remains as a failed state. This he attributes to Tibet’s geopolitical situation but also to “an antiquated political system’s inability to change, a conservative monastic community’s resistance to modernity and the ruling classes’ general failure to change and adapt to modern conditions.”

Describing the issue of Tibet as one of legitimacy, Dawa Norbu says that periods of indirect Chinese influence over Tibet were successful while periods of more direct rule have been unsuccessful due to Tibetan resistance. Chinese authority over Tibet was resisted whenever the Chinese attempted to exercise direct political authority over Tibet, such as in the mid-seventeenth century under the Manchus or in the mid-twentieth century under the Chinese Communists. This brings up a theme to which the author will return: “The history of Sino-Tibetan relations reveals that indirect rule can enjoy maximal Tibetan legitimacy while securing vital Chinese interests in Tibet.” China was traditionally content with only indirect influence in Tibet except when that influence was threatened. The Manchus intervened in Tibet only in order to expel the Zhunghar Mongols and the Gurkhas of Nepal. In the twentieth century, Chinese perceptions of a threat to Tibet were influenced by British and Russian intrigues during the Great Game, including the 1904 British invasion of Tibet, American intrigues in Tibet during the Cold War, and the Indo-Soviet alliance in the 1970s.

Dawa Norbu opines that the reduction of China’s threat perceptions in Tibet might allow for a higher degree of Tibetan autonomy. In this context he mentions an implication “which one hesitates to state,” that imperialism is not inherent in Confucian culture or in the broader patterns of Chinese history. The author writes that the Mongol Empire gave the Chinese the imperial idea that would transform China into a multinational empire while Marxist-Leninism provided a legitimating ideology for the modern retention of that empire. Despite the Chinese Communists’ ideology of liberation of the Tibetans from their own exploitative upper classes, it is ordinary Tibetans who are most adamant about Tibetan independence, while the Tibetan elites, including the Dalai

Lama, are typically more willing to compromise. When the Dalai Lama agreed to start negotiations with Deng's China on autonomy, Dharamsala had to explain to the exile community why *rang-btsan* (independence or self-determination) had been abandoned in favor of *rang-skyong-ljong* (autonomy). Dawa Norbu returns to this theme repeatedly in his book, as will we in our review.

Considering that parts two through five contain some of the most significant insights of the book, I will begin with those parts and then return to Part I.

In Chapter 9: "The Warrior Kings of Tibet and the Tang Dynasty," Dawa Norbu writes that an analysis of the Tibetan Empire period is complicated by the later Buddhisization of ancient Tibetan history that occurred during the Buddhist Renaissance of 842-1419. It is ironic, he says, that this renaissance took place during a period that Buddhist historians refer to as a Dark Ages that began with the end of the era of *chos-rgyal*, or Religious Kings of the Empire Period and ended with the rise of the Sakya Lamas in the 1230s. Under the impact of this Buddhist renaissance, a Buddhist conception of history, *chos-byung*, a history of Buddhism, replaced *rgyal-rabs*, or the royal chronicles, as the dominant interpretation of the history of the Empire: "Ancient Tibetan history was largely rewritten in the light of Buddhist rationale during the Buddhist Renaissance." In this reinterpretation of Tibetan history the Kings of the Empire were described as *chos-rgyal*, or Dharma Kings. However, Dawa Norbu points out that the term *chos-rgyal* derives only from the renaissance period and was not used during the Empire period. During the Empire period Tibetan kings were referred to as *btsan*, or Warrior Kings, and were warrior kings much more than they were proponents or even practitioners of Buddhism.

In Chapter 10: "Imperial China and the Lama Rulers: Imperial Power, a Non-coercive Regime and Military Dependency," Dawa Norbu writes that the Lamaist political system, *chos-srid gnyis-ldan*, which attempted to combine spiritual and political principles, did so by renouncing the use of force. Thereby, Lamaist rule became dependent upon outside force, demonstrating that even if force is renounced in principle it is still a necessary part of the state's existence. "Buddhist Tibet, being an ideological state, tolerated external interference in the political system as long as external powers did not threaten its belief system." Internally, this system created a decentralized state characterized by the existence of several autonomous centers of local power. As the author writes, "A state is by definition based upon force, and any state which does not meet this definition, especially in the modern era, jeopardizes its independence." The reality of Tibet's surrender of sovereignty to foreign patrons was denied and rationalized under the rubric of *chos-yon sbyin-bdag*, or patron-priest relationship, which defined Tibet's relations with foreign patrons as exclusively spiritual. Because of this military dependency, every crisis in Tibet led to the intervention of an external patron; and as these interventions increased, Tibet's independence decreased. The Lamaist state's dependency upon Mongol and Manchu rulers of China ultimately led to Tibet's dependency upon China.

In Chapter 11, "British Interpretations of Sino-Tibetan Relationships: The Genesis of Tibetan 'Autonomy' and Chinese 'Suzerainty,'" Dawa Norbu describes how the traditional Sino-Tibetan relationship of military dependency between an imperial power (pre-1911 China) and a noncoercive regime (Buddhist Tibet) was invalidated by the appearance of Western colonial powers on the Asian political scene. Tibet attempted to preserve its isolation because of its fear of the British, which led the British to invade in 1904, which then led to China's invasion in response and Tibet's appeal to the British to protect them from the Chinese. Dawa Norbu points out that dependency was implicit in Tibet's conception of international relations but colonialism was not. Traditional political relations of subordination or dependency were more tolerant and subtle than are modern relations in which there is no middle ground between independence and nonindependence.

The rise of Chinese nationalism then led to Chinese imperialism in Tibet. "Though itself a victim of Western power politics and active imperialism, the later imperial China and early Republican regime sought to transform the traditional Sino-Tibetan relationship, previously based on symbolic language and ceremonial behavior, into one of political subordination and structural domination." Because of the threat to Tibet from the British, the Chinese were intent upon transforming their previously vague relationship with Tibet, defined by the British as "suzerainty," into an unambiguous Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. "The British made their recognition of Chinese suzerainty conditional on Chinese recognition of Tibetan autonomy. Chinese suzerainty assumed Tibetan autonomy, and Tibetan autonomy implied Chinese suzerainty; the two concepts were inseparable."

In Chapter 12, "The Problematics of the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951," Dawa Norbu points out that the 17-Point Agreement was contradictory in that the Chinese Communists promised to "not alter the existing political system in Tibet," while at the same time declaring that Tibet would eventually come under the new system of "national regional autonomy." The Preamble to the Agreement, in which national regional autonomy was discussed and in which China's historical claim to Tibet and the communist ideological agenda were revealed, was not open to negotiation. "While the Seventeen Points demonstrate that the Tibetan nationality is given a special treatment and separate status within the PRC, the Preamble points out the long-term communist policy to which the Tibetans would be subjected." Tibetans were deceived by the *status quo* promises of the agreement.

Of the seven Tibetan delegates to the 17-Point Agreement negotiations, six have spoken or written about the negotiations and all have mentioned the coercive methods used by the Chinese. Dawa Norbu mentions one of the secret provisions of the Agreement, which was that if the Dalai Lama, then on the border with India, were to go into exile, he could watch the progress and development in Tibet from outside for four or five years, and if he then decided to return, his status and powers would be preserved. This secret provision illustrates China's ambivalence, at that time and since, about whether the Dalai Lama's presence was necessary to legitimate Chinese rule over Tibet

or whether China's plans for the transformation of Tibet might be better facilitated by his absence.

In Chapter 13, "The 1959 Revolt: In Defence of the Value System," Dawa Norbu writes, "The overall Chinese policy toward political Tibet (TAR) was undoubtedly realistic and imaginative, perhaps based on the United Front strategy. But with regard to ethnic Tibet (Kham and Amdo) the Chinese policy was based on a rigid legality and lack of realism: treat the ethnic Tibetans living in China—twice as numerous as those under the Dalai Lama—as both *de jure* and *de facto* Chinese, since they were not under the jurisdiction of Lhasa. This was one of the fundamental flaws of Chinese policy in Tibet and a basic cause of the revolt." He points out that a political and legal implication of the territorial division, which China did not then and would not now admit, was that "China recognized political Tibet, that is the territory under the effective political control of the Tibetan government, as a separate, if not independent, political entity." The Tibetan Revolt began when the Chinese implemented their social changes in this area of Tibet outside the TAR that was no less Tibetan than the TAR. Eastern Tibet, like central Tibet, was a functioning Buddhist society in which revolt against the prevailing system was inconceivable, but defense of that system against outside attempts to alter it was inevitable.

In Chapter 14, "The Political Economy of Communist Rule: Strategic Developments 1951-1998," Dawa Norbu writes that the Chinese Communists have concentrated on establishing their strategic control of Tibet and, having achieved that, have attempted to transfer Tibet's role as a buffer between China and India onto the Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and, to some extent, Kashmir. "It is with this fundamental objective in mind that China has always called for and supported the right to national self-determination in Kashmir, Nagaland, and Sikkim, while at the same time rejecting Tibet's claim to such a right." China has made it known that it has no intention of expanding its power beyond Tibet. The Himalayan states are assured that they have nothing to fear from China; instead, they are warned to beware of their southern neighbor, India. China's goal is to increase its influence in the Himalayan states, reduce that of India, and "prevent the possibility of the Himalayan states becoming forward bases for any attacks against 'China's Tibet', like Nepal's Mustang."

In Chapter 15, "The Tibet Factor in Sino-American Relations 1948-1998: From Secret Service to Public Pressure," Dawa Norbu describes the transformation of U.S. interest in the Tibet issue from secret governmental support for Tibetan resistance to the Chinese Communists in the 1950s and '60s to public support for Tibetans' human rights and self-determination in the 1980s and '90s. The author gives us a list of all CIA airdrops into Tibet, both before and after March 1959, and of those to Mustang in Nepal, complete with dates, drop sites, and the names of those Tibetans who parachuted into Tibet.

The author is aware of the current tension between American popular support and a State Department that wishes to deal with Tibet as a part of China. He interprets U.S. Congressional resolutions on Tibet as having the implication of a threat of greater U.S.

support for Tibetan human rights and self-determination if China refuses to negotiate with the Dalai Lama on Tibetan autonomy. And he predicts that if the U.S. is willing for China to dominate Asia, and U.S. relations with China remain friendly, then the U.S. will probably continue to pursue the current ineffective policy of promoting Sino-Tibetan dialogue. If, however, the U.S. wishes to see a balance of power in Asia among China, Japan, and India, with the U.S. playing the role as balancer, and U.S. relations with China are consequently less than cooperative, then the U.S. might encourage the Tibetan struggle for freedom and self-determination as a means to apply pressure to China.

In Chapter 16, "The Tibet Factor in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," Dawa Norbu says that India recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet in 1954, putting India's seal of legitimacy on the Chinese occupation at a time when many nations were condemning it. In return for this concession, India apparently expected a *quid pro quo* in the form of Chinese acceptance of India's claims to the border between Tibet, now China, and India and of India's special relationship with the Himalayan states. India also imagined that China would respect Tibetan autonomy. However, none of this was put in writing and the Chinese did not share India's assumptions about what India was due in exchange for its acceptance of China's occupation of Tibet. When China failed to respect Tibetan autonomy, or India's claims in regard to the border, or its security interests in the Himalayan states, India felt betrayed. In fact, China's claims in regard to the Indo-Tibetan border were based upon Tibet's historical claims, validated only by India's recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In the 1950s the Indian public supported the Tibetan cause, but the Indian Government remained aloof and even sought to suppress Indian support for Tibet and silence critics of its Tibet policy. Once betrayed by the Chinese, however, India has exploited the Tibet issue more or less depending upon the state of its relations with China. The author believes that China's rise to superpower status will increase the contradictions between it and the West. Western powers will then find the Tibet issue a useful instrument to employ in their relations with China. India's use of the Tibet issue, on the other hand, is only credible when allied with a similar interest on the part of another power such as the United States.

In Chapter 17, "Beijing, Taiwan and the Tibet Question: The Politics of Internal Differentiation," Dawa Norbu fears that the U.S. may acquiesce in China's takeover of Taiwan much as India did in regard to Tibet. The U.S. may find itself as helpless against a determined Chinese action against Taiwan as India found itself against the Chinese in Tibet. China's proposed solution for Taiwan's status, "one-country-two-systems," is basically the same formula that China proposed in the 17-Point Agreement to resolve the political status of Tibet. Like Tibet, Taiwan is promised a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region. The author recommends that if China wants to convince Taiwan to accept an autonomous status under Beijing it should improve its practice of autonomy in Tibet. He recommends to Taiwan and Tibet that they unite to demand the creation of a system of federation for China in which Taiwan and Tibet would be members of the United Nations.

In Chapter 18, "China's Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1979-1998," Dawa Norbu analyzes the dialogue that Deng Xiaoping initiated with the Dalai Lama in December 1978 as "perhaps the most significant development in post-1959 Sino-Tibetan politics." The Dalai Lama provided an opening for Deng by stating in March 1978 that the issue of Tibet was not independence but the "happiness" of the Tibetan people. Deng responded in December 1978 to Gyalo Thondup: "The basic question is whether Tibet is part of China or not. This should be kept as the criteria for testing the truth. … So long as it is not accepted that Tibet is an integral part of China, there is nothing else to talk about." As the author says, "The Tibetan side interpreted this as the agenda for all negotiations except those aiming for total independence," or in the words most often used in the Tibetan community, "anything can be discussed except independence." The Tibetan interpretation would imply that any aspect of Tibet's political history and status short of independence was on the table for discussion, which Deng's actual words do not support. The results of the actual "negotiations" also do not support this interpretation. A more accurate interpretation of Deng's meaning may be that no aspects of Tibet's history or status, all of which related to the issue of Tibet's independence, were open to discussion.

The author analyzes China's rejection of the Dalai Lama's 1987 Strasbourg Proposal as based upon the Dalai Lama's claim that Tibet was independent before 1950. What China wants is "the Dalai Lama's public acknowledgment that what the PRC did in 1950 was a historically valid and ideologically justified action and that Tibet has always been part of China." To maintain that Tibet was *de facto* independent before 1950 is equivalent to an accusation that China's "peaceful liberation" of Tibet was actually Chinese imperialism against Tibet. All of the Dalai Lama's proposals to negotiate about the "status" of Tibet or the "issue" of Tibet are seen by the Chinese as based upon this claim to have been independent.

In Chapter 19, "Tibet's Possible Future Structures: The Dalai's and the Dissidents' Visions of Federation," Dawa Norbu writes that the absence of any large-scale ethnic conflict since 1959 does not signify the Tibetan people's acceptance of Chinese rule or lack of will on the part of Tibetans to resist it. Tibetans revolt whenever they find any social space within which to do so. "Tibetan resistance erupts into open rebellions whenever the PRC relaxes its complex system of domination--as it did, for example, in the late 1950s and in the late 1980s. Otherwise, the tight, multilayered Chinese security system, structural violence, and the denial of social space rule out any protracted large-scale ethnic conflict in Tibet." The denial of sufficient social space for Tibetans to revolt has been a major goal of Chinese policy. "The Party is all-pervasive in Tibetan life. … The basic goal of the Maoists is to destroy the traditional Tibetan civil society … The Party has installed itself in the place of civil society, where freedom, individuality and privacy once prevailed. … The Maoist version of totalitarianism is antithetical to the very spirit and structure of Tibetan civil society."

Having analyzed the nature of the conflict in Tibet as based upon ethnicity and the illegitimacy of Chinese rule over the non-Chinese Tibetans, the author turns to possible solutions. The three solutions considered are: "(a) Chinese liberal visions of a federation in China, in which Tibet would enjoy 'autonomous statehood'; (b) the Dalai Lama's

demand for a 'self-governing democratic Tibet in association with China' and (c) a possible future structure as suggested by Sino-Tibetan history, Tibetan cultural sovereignty and regional geopolitics." The federative idea (as well as many other solutions to the Tibet problem) may founder on the territorial definition of Tibet. The Dalai Lama's otherworldly proposal to transform Tibet into a "zone of peace" fails to satisfy China's security interests in relation to India. It also fails to acknowledge Chinese fears that Tibetan autonomy leads inevitably to Tibetan nationalism, Tibetan separatism, and ultimately, Tibetan independence. The third possible solution, Dawa Norbu's own, to which he returns in his opening summary, and to which we as well shall return, is a traditionalist solution, which assumes that Tibetans historically tolerated a symbolic Chinese role in Tibet and would do so again if there was less direct Chinese interference in their lives.

In Chapter 20, "Self-Determination in the Post-Communist Era: The Tibetan People's Case," Dawa Norbu writes that "national self-determination, as an emanicipatory ideology, has enormous appeal to other-determined peoples everywhere, and because it evokes popular sovereignty as its core social message, hardly anyone in the democratic age can openly challenge it. But its implementation has serious implications to empires and their contemporary successors, multinational states which number over 200 in the UN." The Chinese Communists decided that the solution to the Chinese minorities' self-determination was not independence from China but liberation from the oppression of their own class exploiters. Only the Chinese revolution, in fact, could liberate the minorities from themselves. China's supposedly innovative system of national regional autonomy has, however, the author says, degenerated into internal colonialism. Dawa Norbu therefore makes a case for "internal self-determination," which he defines as equivalent to Tibet's traditional pre-modern status, under which Tibetans enjoyed self-determination, *rang-thag rang-gchod* in Tibetan, meaning literally "self-decision, self-made." The self in this definition is understood in both collective and individual senses.

Dawa Norbu thus proposes a return to a relationship between China and Tibet confined primarily to personal relations between the Dalai Lama in Lhasa and the Chinese "emperor" in Beijing, with few if any Chinese in Tibet. The author says that traditional Tibetan social history was a history of internal self-determination, and that Tibetans would be happy to return to that status. This status is described as midway between the two extremes of *rang-btsan*, independence, and *rang-skyong ljongs*, autonomy. Dawa Norbu returns to this proposal in his introductory chapters, so it is unnecessary to analyze it here, except to say that this proposal has serious problems, primary among which is its hope to turn back time to a previous era, which the author himself says elsewhere cannot be done. Another problem is that China has its own solution to the Tibetan problem incompatible with this or any other solution. Finally, the idea of "internal self-determination" is contradictory to the fundamental definition of self-determination, which is that a people decides for itself whether it is to be "internal" in relation to another state or independent of any other state.

We now return to Dawa Norbu's eight-chapter introductory summary, in which he presents what he describes as "some of the main findings" of his life-long study of Tibetan history and politics. In these chapters the author summarizes many of the themes we have already examined. First, we must mention a statement, on page one of chapter one, that contradicts Dawa Norbu's proposal for a revival of a traditional type of relationship between China and Tibet: "By the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, the symbolic domination and ceremonial relations fundamentally changed with the emergence of modern political ideas of Chinese nationalism and nation-state within which the Chinese Nationalists first and then the Communists sought to integrate Tibet, based upon a unitary conception of a Han-dominated state." The author later suggests that between the degree of domination desired by the Nationalists and by the Communists may lay sufficient space for Tibetan autonomy, but the more important fact is that the nature of political relations fundamentally changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to the industrial revolution and the advent of the modern state.

Dawa Norbu points out that the Mongol conquests ultimately made Chinese dreams of rule over "all under Heaven" a reality. Because of Buddhism, Tibet had a special status under the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing. Tibetan lamas did not *kowtow* to Yuan, Ming, or Qing emperors. Even in Confucian China's scale of values and hierarchy the high lamas of Tibet ranked higher than any king within China's tributary system in East Asia. The Fifth Dalai Lama was treated as equivalent to an independent sovereign during his visit to Peking in 1652, not only because of the Manchu Qing Emperor's respect for Tibetan Buddhism but because the Dalai Lama's influence was needed to establish Manchu control over the still independent Mongols. Qing China gradually increased its control over Tibet by opportunist interventions during crisis situations with which the noncoercive regime was unable to cope.

The Gelugpa regime of the Fifth Dalai Lama began with a much greater degree of internal independence in relation to China than the Sakya had, but ended by "progressively losing its internal independence and freedom of action to an extent that no Yuan Emperor had ever subjected the Sakya regime. The main reason concerned the radical change in the international environment." The Mongol Empire had no rivals, but the Manchu had to intervene in Tibet to oppose invasions by the Zhunghar Mongols, the Gurkhas of Nepal, and finally the British from India. To this the author comments, "In the ultimate analysis, the Lamaist non-coercive regime, which might appeal to Tibetan lamas and others, may not only be a contradiction in terms, it is also anachronistic in the modern international system."

Despite his analysis of a gradual and inevitable deterioration of Tibetan independence under the changing international environment, Dawa Norbu attempts to revive the idea of indirect rule as a model for the future. He says that indirect rule was a successful pattern for Imperial China in the past. The motives behind indirect rule are to minimize local resistance or nationalistic revolt, yet to establish a degree of control over the dependent country, varying to accommodate different domestic and international situations. He points out that indirect rule in Tibet has always been successful whereas direct rule has not. "Whenever the Chinese acted through the institution or person of the

Dalai Lama, there was no anti-Chinese reaction or revolt against their indirect rule. But whenever the Emperor or Amban took direct political action, bypassing the indigenous instruments of indirect rule, the Tibetan people tended to revolt against the Chinese."

The author admits, though, that the rules are different for empires than for the modern nation-state. "Empire-tolerated heterogeneity allowed considerable social space for different identities, cultures, languages, etc. to exist, whereas the nation-state, in the name of political centralization and cultural unification, does not tolerate the politics of differences; instead it melts minorities within the crucible of national integration." Also, "The Confucian ideocracy was transformed into a Han-dominated nation-state which tolerated no separate entities or identities like Tibet." The author also realizes, "it was not moral persuasion or legal argument but force that decided Tibet's modern fate." This, he says, was justified neither by Confucian culture nor Chinese history but only by the "tyranny of the logic of the nation-state and Communist interventionist ideology." Although he sees this *fait accompli* as "almost unalterable," as a Tibetan, Dawa Norbu feels obliged to make the attempt.

In the final chapter of his introductory summary, titled "The Anatomy of Tibetan Autonomy: An Agenda for the Twenty-first Century," Dawa Norbu attempts to give some substance to Tibetan autonomy. He says that most Tibetans do not understand the intricacies of the various proposals for Tibetan autonomy or independence, and that they simply put their faith in the Dalai Lama to achieve the best solution. He says that what Tibetans desire "is not so much political independence but socio-cultural independence." However, this contradicts his previous assertion that Tibetans in exile were opposed to the Dalai Lama's abandonment of independence in favor of autonomy in the Strasbourg Statement of 1987 and that ordinary Tibetans tend to demand independence or self-determination while the elites are more willing to compromise on such fundamental issues. In maintaining that there is a consensus of opinion among both Tibetans and liberal Chinese that Tibet should have more autonomy, Dawa Norbu slips into typical Tibetan wishful thinking: "Therefore, it seems to be only a matter of time before the Chinese public compels the Maoist power elite to grant Tibet greater autonomy."

Dawa Norbu compares KMT proposals for Tibetan autonomy with the system of national regional autonomy imposed by the Communists. He characterizes the KMT proposals as more liberal than those of the CCP and as genuine and serious in contrast to the Communists who had a hidden agenda to undermine Tibetan autonomy and destroy Tibetan identity. Another difference that he does not mention may be that the KMT was powerless to directly control Tibet whereas the Communists were able to finally realize the Chinese dream to achieve total control over Tibet. He admits that the purpose of the Communists has been to "totally integrate, assimilate and merge the Tibetan people with the Han majority not only politically and economically but also culturally, linguistically, socially. Such an assimilationist policy in the name of 'revolution' amounts to a systematic destruction of Tibetan autonomy and sinicization of Tibetan identity." He writes that the goal of the Chinese Communists has been to "sinicize the Tibetans so that the Tibetan problem is resolved once and for all."

Dawa Norbu makes the somewhat dubious assertion that such a Han project cannot succeed in Tibet because Tibetan cultural identity is too strong. He says that the Chinese Communists have failed to assimilate the Tibetans and that therefore their Tibet policy has failed and they must seek a new policy. This assertion might be challenged by current Chinese officials who seem quite satisfied with their policies in Tibet. Dawa Norbu writes that China's system of national regional autonomy allows no real autonomy in Tibet, but then he takes a leap of faith by adding, "It is in such a context of empty autonomy that the Dalai Lama's call for genuine autonomy makes sense in the post-Communist and post-Cold War era." Dawa Norbu's argument is that the Chinese Communists have failed to allow Tibetans any meaningful autonomy—which was not their intention—and therefore they or their more democratic successors will have to do so because justice, the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan people, and their international supporters demand it. Many Chinese, both Communist and "post-Communist," might wonder why they should satisfy any of the desires of those whom they characterize as "splittists and Western anti-China forces."

Dawa Norbu also makes other questionable assertions, such as that the Chinese cult of state sovereignty was "borne out of certain historical conditions which are no longer in existence," that "the Communist concept of multinational ideocracy is no longer tenable in the post-Communist era," and "there now seems to be no alternative before the Chinese Communist Empire but a federal system." He suggests, "If the present Communist leaders want to find a satisfactory solution and yet retain the present extent of the PRC's territory, 60 percent of which belongs to the minority nationalities, federation may be the answer." And he maintains that autonomy is the general consensus as a "framework within which the Tibetan Question may be resolved in the near future. It enjoyed historical precedence in Anglo-Chinese negotiations, considerable Confucian concurrence, as reflected in the imperial policy of indirect rule, and growing international consensus. Currently both the Communist rulers and the Dalai Lama use the term but with different meanings which need to be bridged and negotiated through dialogue." It will be difficult to resolve the Tibetan issue in this way given that what the Dalai Lama means by autonomy is "self rule" while what the Chinese mean by autonomy is no autonomy at all.

Finally, Dawa Norbu concludes with an analysis of what kind of autonomy under China would be acceptable to most Tibetans. Beginning with the Dalai Lama's proposals that Tibet should be a "self-governing democratic political entity in association with China," he admits, "At the present time, the Communists might not agree to such a democratic structure." Also, the Dalai Lama's proposed status of association with China does not satisfy China's claim to full sovereignty. "There is, therefore, an urgent need for both the Chinese supreme leader and the Dalai Lama to negotiate on the question of Chinese political and territorial sovereignty over Tibet. Historically, the Chinese insistence on their territorial-political sovereignty over Tibet is not backed by history; it is more a function of the rise of Chinese power in modern times."

The author says that Tibetans should have full control over their economy and Tibet's natural resources and that Tibetans want a minimum of Chinese interference in

the administration of their region. They also want the religious freedom that is denied to them because the Chinese have realized the connection between Buddhism, Tibetan identity, and Tibetan nationalism. He says that repression of religious freedom in Tibet simply exacerbates Tibetans' anti-China sentiments and Tibetan nationalism. The separation of religion from nationalism, he says, can paradoxically only be achieved "by granting full religious freedom and by restoring indirect rule by the Dalai Lama. For only he can moderate and control Tibetan cultural nationalism directed against the Chinese."

In his analysis of China's policies in Tibet and how they are directed at the total elimination of Tibetan national identity, Dawa Norbu achieves his goal as an objective social scientist and historian. However, in his hopeful proposal for how Tibet may attain autonomy he cannot avoid his subjectivity. His analysis of China's policies and objectives in Tibet contradicts his proposals for Tibetan autonomy. In order to substantiate his proposals Dawa Norbu has to engage in the type of wishful thinking typical of those who attempt to put some substance into the idea of Tibetan autonomy within a unitary Han nationalist China, whether Communist or otherwise.

Dawa Norbu's proposal for Tibetan autonomy relies upon a democratic China in the future composed of Chinese people so unlike their historical forebears as to be unrecognizable. Despite Tibetan hopes that some Chinese dissidents, or perhaps Chinese Buddhists, will have more sympathy for Tibet in the future, few have demonstrated any support for a Tibetan autonomy that threatens the unity of the Chinese state, as any real autonomy inevitably does. The Chinese are quite aware of the association between Tibetan autonomy, Tibetan culture, and Tibetan nationalism and are unlikely to allow any real autonomy for fear of a revival of nationalism and separatism. The idea that the Dalai Lama's presence could prevent the rise of Tibetan separatism is unlikely to convince many Chinese, and is even unlikely to be accurate.

All proposals to resolve the issue of Tibet assume that the Chinese agree that there is an issue of Tibet to be resolved. However, an issue of Tibet's political status, which is what has to be assumed if two sides are to negotiate about political issues, is not admitted by the Communist Chinese, or any Chinese, who claim that Tibet is an inalienable part of China. In the typical Chinese opinion, even if Tibet's status was once questionable, which they are loathe to admit, then certainly the issue was resolved once and for all in 1951, or, if not then, in 1959. To admit that there are unresolved issues about Tibet's status that can be resolved only by negotiations with the head of Tibet's former government would be for the Chinese to admit that Tibet was in fact independent and their 1950 "liberation" was imperialistic. This is why the Chinese are so insistent that the Dalai Lama should admit not only that Tibet is now part of China but that it has always been part of China.

All proposals to resolve the issue of Tibet, a nonexistent issue according to the Chinese, also ignore China's already revealed solution. China allowed a modicum of cultural autonomy in Tibet in the 1980s and was surprised when Tibetan culture and religion quickly revived and, along with it, anti-Chinese Tibetan nationalism. Any Chinese leader for some time to come who proposes to allow any real Tibetan autonomy is likely to be reminded of this precedent. Since the demonstrations and riots of 1987-89

in Tibet, martial law in Tibet, and then the June 1989 Tiananmen events, the Chinese have settled upon a policy in Tibet with which they seem quite satisfied. This policy combines a restriction of cultural autonomy, continual repression of all aspects of Tibetan nationalism, and economic development that buys the compliance of some Tibetans but that also supports Chinese colonization.

China has also mounted an external propaganda campaign about Tibet intended to demonstrate the "truth" about Tibet to the outside world. One should not assume that these campaigns are simply a camouflage for Chinese insecurities about Tibet. There is also apparently a real Chinese confidence that they have found the solution to the Tibet issue, which is the traditional Chinese solution to frontier problems by means of colonization and assimilation, not negotiations with the "Dalai splittist clique" or a Tibetan autonomy that would inevitably perpetuate the fact and the issue of Tibetan separatism.

Proposals for Tibetan autonomy face, but do not adequately resolve, the difficulty of defining exactly what autonomy is. The Dalai Lama's idea that autonomy is equivalent to "self-rule" defines autonomy as almost equivalent to independence, or at least "internal independence." The problem with autonomy is that it has no objective definition. Unlike self-determination, which implies independence, under self-rule, or autonomy, the "self" in question, in this case the Tibetan nation, does not do the determining. The definition and practice of Tibetan autonomy within China would be and is determined by China, not Tibet, and Tibetans would have little power to persuade the Chinese to abide by Tibetans' conception of autonomy. China promised much in the way of Tibetan autonomy in the 17-Point Agreement, and then followed a strategy to constrain and compromise that autonomy out of existence. Any Chinese promise in regard to Tibetan autonomy would have to be regarded like that of the 17-Point Agreement, as a temporary expedient intended to achieve ultimate Chinese assimilationist goals.

Dawa Norbu's proposals for Tibetan autonomy, like those of so many others, founders on the realities of Chinese politics and China's possessiveness about Tibet. But Dawa Norbu's proposals also founder upon his own insights into the political realities of the situation. Dawa Norbu has told us that "traditional political relations were more tolerant and subtle than are modern relations in which there is no middle ground between independence and non-independence;" that the "symbolic domination and ceremonial relations of imperial times fundamentally changed with the emergence of modern political ideas of Chinese nationalism and nation-state;" that "the nation-state, in the name of political centralization and cultural unification, does not tolerate the politics of differences; instead it melts minorities within the crucible of national integration;" that the purpose of the Communists has been to "totally integrate, assimilate and merge the Tibetan people with the Han majority not only politically and economically but also culturally, linguistically, socially;" and that the goal of the Chinese Communists has been to "sinicize the Tibetans so that the Tibetan problem is resolved once and for all." Where in this analysis is one to find any ground for Tibetan autonomy?

Dawa Norbu has to imagine that there is somewhere within the Chinese character a post-Communist or perhaps a pre-Communist Confucian Chinese who will tolerate a separate Tibetan national identity within a unified Chinese state. However, his proposals for a Confucian solution contradict his own analysis of the historical political evolution from empires to nation-states. He has also failed to explain how a post-Communist democratic China could tolerate the separatist threat that Tibetan autonomy and the survival of Tibetan national identity would pose for China. Dawa Norbu and others have proposed that the Dalai Lama is capable of preventing the emergence of anti-Chinese Tibetan nationalism under the conditions of Tibetan autonomy, but there is no assurance that he would be able to do so, certainly no assurance likely to convince the notoriously suspicious Chinese. And what about the periods of minority Dalai Lamas in which Tibet often suffered political chaos in the past? The nature of autonomy is that it allows freedom of expression, individual and collective, else it is no autonomy worth the name. Freedom of expression in Tibet would inevitably allow for the growth of Tibetan nationalism and calls for Tibetan independence. The Dalai Lama could not prevent it, and therefore the Chinese cannot allow genuine autonomy in Tibet.

Dawa Norbu's idea about "internal self-determination" might perhaps allow for some human rights for individuals but not for the survival of Tibetan collective identity. Tibetan human rights under a system of autonomy would not include the freedom to contradict Chinese policy on Tibet or the Chinese version of Tibetan history or to challenge China's claim to sovereignty over Tibet. Besides being a contradiction in terms, "internal self-determination" represents a confusion over what is the real issue of Tibet: individual rights or those of the collective; the Dalai Lama's "happiness of the Tibetan people" or the survival of Tibetan national identity; religion or nation. Some freedom on the individual level is undoubtedly possible for Tibetans in return for political allegiance to China. Collective freedom, on the other hand, is not possible for Tibetans under the conditions of Chinese rule.

In contrast to the Dalai Lama's statements that the issue of Tibet is the happiness of the Tibetan people, I would contend that the most fundamental issue of Tibet is the survival of Tibetan national identity. In contrast to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan religious leaders' universalistic Buddhist idea that national borders are not important, I would contend that without borders there is no nation and no national identity. Dawa Norbu has unwittingly agreed by quoting, twice, an ancient Chinese source to the effect that "No country can exist without frontiers."

Dawa Norbu concludes by saying that his hope is for "a truly autonomous and neutralized Tibet that resolves the strategic contradiction and constant tension between China and India, autonomy that is congruent with the historical pattern of Sino-Tibetan relations, which is consonant with current Confucian consensus and with the Tibetan people's limited aspiration for greater autonomy, so that all earnest supporters of the Tibetan cause around the globe, including Chinese, Indians and Westerners, might feel proud that they have all helped to create a just and equitable autonomous Tibetan society in the heart of Asia." One can only comment: How can a country be "neutralized," how is autonomy congruent with a historical pattern of ever-increasing Chinese control over

Tibet, what is the "current Confucian consensus," and how can one guarantee that Tibetans' aspirations for greater autonomy remain limited? With all due respect for Dawa Norbu and his analysis of China's historical encroachment upon and ultimate intention to eliminate all vestiges of Tibetan independence, one fails to see how his analysis does not contradict his optimistic proposals for Tibetan autonomy.

With the exception of his foray into unrealistic optimism in regard to Tibetan autonomy, Dawa Norbu's book is a brilliant analysis of Sino-Tibetan cultural and political relations. His book is full of the penetrating insights that have marked his career as a participant in and analyst of Tibetan history and politics. I think I am on safe ground in saying that his book is unsurpassed in its contribution to an understanding of modern Tibetan history. Those who hope to participate in any sort of dialogue on Tibetan history and politics should not neglect to arm themselves with the information contained in this magnificent collection of Dawa Norbu's most important insights into the Tibetan issue.