

# Tibet's Historical Relationship to Foreign Affairs

By

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## Introduction

Since 1950, Tibet has been ruled by the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China. As a result, Tibetans have been stripped of their cultural heritage by being forced to assimilate into atheistic communism, and thus disregard their four thousand-year-old Buddhist religion. China invaded Tibet after WWII and claimed that Tibet had always been a part of China and not its own sovereign state. To understand this conflict and the source of its roots as to why the Chinese government believed Tibet was a part of their republic, the formation of Tibet's Empire and history must be closely examined. Tibet, located on the highest desolate plateau and home to the Himalayan Mountain range, stands as one of the oldest mysteries to the rest of the world. For thousands of years Tibet was not a unified state, but a land for nomads to roam. These nomads practiced Shamanism and the religion of Bon hundreds of years before Buddhism was introduced to Tibet. These nomads had no state structure and relied on natural animals and resources like yaks for their food and clothing. It was not until the 7<sup>th</sup> century that Tibet was unified by its first King, Songsten Gampo, who made the capital of Tibet, Lhasa.<sup>1</sup> Once Tibet was unified, Gampo opened communications and diplomacy with the territories surrounding Tibet, notably China, India, and Mongolia. With the establishment of the Tibetan Empire, surrounding Kingdoms and territories engaged in many cultural exchanges that led to the development of Tibet's present-day culture of "Buddhist resistance" as a direct result of Chinese occupation. For years, Tibet had been isolated from international relations and has had little participation in major global conflicts, despite this, Tibet became a plateau where an advanced Buddhist civilization was conceived.

Like religion, food and trade were an essential part in Tibet's foreign affairs. For thousands of years, people were primarily nomadic with limited resources and relied on the scarce shrubs, grains, and eventually yaks for nutrition. Once the Silk Road was established, it was not uncommon for traders to have their caravans robbed, which reinforced the need to open communications and security among neighboring towns on the plateau. The Silk Road served as a way for outsiders to connect with Tibet through the process of trade and shipping goods. While Tibet had high quantities of gold and other rare materials within the temples and monasteries, Tibet still lacked many resources. Of course, silk went through Tibet, but salt and other staple items like tea by-passed through the plateau. Traders followed their desired product and found routes that went around Tibet completely. Since the inception of the formal state of Tibet, foreign relations determined Tibet's role and status in Asia through treaties and military action.

Tibet's Buddhist features play a vital role in Tibet's prestige and respect. People traveled

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<sup>1</sup> Gray Tuttle and Kurtis Schaeffer, *Tibetan History Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 34.

to Central Tibet to witness Buddhist sites and major monasteries. The monastery supports Tibetan communities by not only being a place of worship, but by serving as housing for thousands of monks and administrators, grain storehouses, a tax collection center, and of course, the main social center. Since there are different sects of Buddhism, there have been magnitudes of temples which have been built over the last thousand years. Some of the more influential schools of thought and temples include the Sakya, The Bonpo (or Bon), and the Potala Palace in Lhasa, where the Dalai Lama used to reside before being exiled. These different schools held different beliefs on reincarnation and the concept of karma. One foreigner who wished to visit and pay respect to the monasteries was the Mongolian leader, Gushri Khan. Buddhism's influence on Khan is significant because, at this time, the majority of Mongols were converting to Islam, but still held a respectable tolerance for Buddhism. In 1637, the Fifth Dalai Lama met with Khan, and gained a valued ally with military strength.<sup>2</sup> It was the Mongolians that helped the Dalai Lama eliminate many of his enemies (other Tibetan leaders from competing provinces) within Tibet to secure the Dalai Lama's power.

This paper explains and provides evidence to show that Tibet is its own sovereign state. However, as long as Tibet is oppressed by China, Tibet will not have the freedom it once had when it was autonomous. By providing information on Tibet's foreign affairs, I argue that Tibet should be viewed as a nation-state with a strong presence of Buddhism. This has helped shaped Tibet and its foreign policy and further influenced how the country views outside neighbors.

## **Tibetan Empire**

The Tibetan empire references the Yarlung empire of Central Tibet, which was ruled by King Songsten Gampo. Gampo is revered as one of the most important Tibetan rulers, for he not only established the Tibetan empire, but also created what is thought to be the Tibetan alphabet.<sup>3</sup> With the help of Songsten Gampo, the Imperial Tibetan Period witnessed Tibet split in territories called horns, marking the first time that Tibet was officially categorized into governing regions. These horns included: The Right Horn, Central Horn, Left Horn, and the Branch Horn.<sup>4</sup> These main regions have since changed and are recognized as provinces by China. Once Central and Western Tibet were conquered by Songsten Gampo, he proceeded to march in to what is modern day China. This forced the Tang Dynasty to have diplomacy with Tibet. Furthermore, brides were sent to Songsten Gampo to improve relationships to neighboring lands as well. Emperor Gampo's most important wives were from China and Nepal, as they introduced Buddhism to Tibet's elite. Gampo's wives were vessels not only for diplomacy, but for Buddhism as well, converting Gampo's and other family members of nobility. An example of this can be seen through the marriage of Gampo and Princess Wencheng. This alliance led to the establishment of Buddhism among the Tibetan elite and gave Monks influential status as Gampo's administrators and attendants. Thus, brides were crucial to the practice of Buddhism in Tibet.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tuttle and Schaeffer, *Tibetan History Reader*, 350.

<sup>3</sup> John Powers, *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles Versus the People's Republic of China* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), 168.

<sup>4</sup> Karl E. Ryavec, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2015), 54.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Berzin, "A Survey of Tibetan History," *Online Unpublished Manuscript* (Project of Berzin Archives).

After the downfall of the empire in the tenth century, trade routes were once again unprotected, and infrastructure broke down, leading to a diffusion period. Throughout Tibet, local Kingdoms arose and competed with each other in place of the once strong empire. For Tibet, as a whole, foreign relations had stopped. Although it was not uncommon for these kingdoms to have alliances with the Nepalese, the Indians, Chinese or even the Mongolians, these Kingdoms were divided and were not able to pose a threat as an invading force to other countries. This may explain why the Mongols were able to conquer the majority of Tibet years before China laid claim to Tibet.

### **Chinese Relations**

The Chinese have always been involved in Tibet's political and foreign relations. Due to the discovery of Chinese records dating back to approximately 208 AD, the Chinese government claimed Tibet's plateau always belonged to them. Around the third century, the Han Dynasty had their capital in Xi'an, Western China, and needed inner Asian trade to maintain the empire's economic needs. Thus, troops were stationed along the northern side of the plateau where the Silk Road ran through Tibet, enabling Chinese occupation over Tibetans.<sup>6</sup> Once the emergence of the Tibetan Empire had occurred, the Tang Dynasty in China was in consistent talks with Tibet. In fact, the Tibetan Empire had penetrated into China and maintained tribute and peace talks between the Tang and King Songsten Gampo. Not only was Tibet's military strong during this time, but the country experienced social and economic growth in correspondence with the Tang Dynasty during the eighth and ninth centuries. During a brief period of Chinese occupation that lasted from 1720-1728 the estate system established in Tibet served as monetary transfer service which coordinated with the government treasury. This in turn affected the monastery and the nobility's living space permanently. Like other religions past and present, Tibet's Buddhist roots took place in almost every action of Tibetan officials. This is because the monks were able to be administrative members of the formal government and help run the bureaucracy of Tibet.

### **Mongolian Ties**

One of the most common traits in past civilization exchanges is warfare. Various groups and states attacked each other for the resources they wanted or needed. However, in Tibet, the inhabitants had the advantage of harsh terrain, with elevation beginning at an average of five thousand feet and the presence of dry sparse vegetation throughout the plateau. These geographic features are an incredible deterrent to larger armies. The mountains and high elevations make supply lines inefficient and unable to support a large invading force in a timely manner, especially for the horse riding Mongolians. Tibet had a rather peculiar relationship with warfare and military experiences than the rest of the world. Tibet's religious ties to Buddhism dominated most of Tibet's culture and past. Due to these heavy ties to Buddhism, lack of modern resources, and Chinese censorship, I argue that the Himalayan people are not entirely modernized due to their rural mountainous location; however, their response and resistance should still be respected.

Around 1206, Ghengis Khan asked Tibet for tribute and Tibet gave the Mongolians tribute for the first few years. After an unknown amount of years of not paying tribute, the Mongolians invaded under the leadership of Doorda Darqan, who was delegated by Mongol Prince Godan,

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<sup>6</sup> Tuttle and Schaeffer, *Tibetan History Reader*, 34.

Ögedei's son.<sup>7</sup> This Mongolian invasion period is dated from 1240-1354 AD and proves the capability of the Mongols rule and correspondence of the regional Tibet leaders that held open communications. Mongol rule over Tibet demonstrates that China is not the only nation that had ties to Tibet, and thus shows how China is just another invader of this country.

The Mongolian dynasty ruling was the Yuan Dynasty, and they wanted all the regions of Tibet labeled in their own administrative system. Thus, the areas in Tibet were changed to be known during the Mongolian Period as: Dome in the East, Xifan in the southern East, and the two central areas of U and Tsang, followed by Ngari in the west.<sup>8</sup> Dome, U, and Tsang all were points of interest with military conflicts, however, the western territory of Ngari, was not a point of interest for military conflicts because of its mountainous geographical features. Historian Alan Sanders used archaeological evidence to claim, "His (Ghengis) grandson Godan Khan invaded Tibet with thirty-thousand men and destroyed several Buddhist monasteries north of Lhasa."<sup>9</sup> It is key to note that although the Mongols were some of the mightiest rulers in all of history, some parts of Tibet remained independent. Those regions were in the central and western regions of Tibet. These regions even influenced parts of Mongolian culture by introducing multiple levels of Buddhist thought to their rulers. The Mongolians allowed for the Sakya Temple and other monasteries to have a wider range of power than before. This time period exemplifies how Tibet expressed itself to foreigners and how Tibet's Buddhist background guided perspective on warfare. These peaceful methods that predate China's adoption of Buddhism, depict Tibet as a state that did not engage in constant subjection of other nations, but rather focused on spiritual principles.

The Mongols did more than promote warfare throughout the world, they rebuilt Tibet's infrastructure multiple times over the course of multiple military occupations. When the Mongols secured their rule over Tibet during the 13th century, they successfully conducted surveys (via interviews and population measurements) through the empowerment of monks at local monasteries.<sup>10</sup> This Mongol policy gave the loyal Buddhist monks and regional leaders their own sovereignty despite being ruled by their Mongol "overlords." Thus, through these surveys and Mongol military power, organization and influence over Tibet was consolidated. The embedded relationship the monasteries had with the ruling Mongols allowed Tibet to govern themselves, as long as they still served the Khan. Ultimately, this reveals that Tibet was controlled not by its own government or Chinese, but from a different existing outside force.

## India's Relation

With Tibet wedged between China and India, the plateau was and still remains a buffer zone between two great powers. Tibet adopted Buddhism from these countries and it expanded out of India through the Silk Road. Not only did Tibet gain its religion from India, but India also supports the Dalai Lama and the other exiles, solidifying Mahāyāna Buddhism, a type of Buddhism

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<sup>7</sup> Per K. Sorensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies: Tibetan Buddhist Historiography* (Harrassowitz: Weisbaden, 1994), 86.

<sup>8</sup> Turrell V. Wylie, "The First Mongol Conquest of Tibet Reinterpreted," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37, no. 1 (June 1977): 120.

<sup>9</sup> Alan J. K. Sanders, *Historical Dictionary of Mongolia* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 309.

<sup>10</sup> Kurtis Schaeffer, Matthew Kastein, and Gray Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 278.

practiced in Tibet. Atisa Dipankarasrijnana (982-1054 CE) is responsible for traveling between Kashmir and Tibet and creating the school of Buddhist thought in Tibet called Kadam. This is key to note, since the shift of Buddhism went from India to Tibet, during the Islamic Empire's expansion, which had gained momentum in Saudi Arabia and quickly spread to Pakistan and India.<sup>11</sup> While this shift was occurring, the amount of traditional sacred texts that flowed into Tibet from India exemplifies how Buddhism held great influence over social, political, and cultural aspects of Tibet. Tibet's acquirement of many unedited Sanskrit Buddhist texts not only enriched its own culture but allowed Tibet to become a well-known place for Buddhist study.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the rise of the Pakmodrupa was essential for the fundamental for Tibet's culture. Readings from *Tibetan History Reader* and *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* explain the decline of Mongol influence on Tibet as a mark of the beginning of the Pakmodrupa Period. Towards the end of the height of the Mongol's Yuan Empire, the Sakya monastery held the administrative responsibilities for the Mongol Empire in Tibet. However, a descendent of Pakmod Dorje Gyeltsen (a former Tibetan Emperor), Jangchup Gyeltsen challenged the Sakya Monks' right to be the administrative extension, and consolidated power in central Tibet. During this time, Jangchup built fortifications throughout central Tibet like U-Tsang, U and Dam.<sup>12</sup> Tradition was heavily valued in Tibet and this is demonstrated with Jangchup Gyeltsen taking the name *Ihatsun* (loosely translated to light bringer) to bring back traditional ruler titles that were gone during the Mongol Period. Bringing back a Tibetan title rather than adopting a Mongolian title, promoted nationalism and patriotism among the Tibetans who were under foreign rule for over one hundred years. Furthermore, employing a more traditional name brought popularity to his rule and allowed Jangchup Gyeltsen to add credibility to his regime.

Jangchup Gyeltsen's ability to lead troops and against the Mongolian backed Sakyas is one of the reasons why he remained one of the most important figures in Tibet. By allowing the Pakmodrupa to be his platform for a spiritual and political standing, he consolidated power in his regions of central Tibet. This was a result of the Tibetans probable lack of fondness toward the Mongols and due to the Sakyas lack of unity.<sup>13</sup> With the Mongols away, the Bon tradition became popular and incorporated new Buddhist traditions from Chinese origins. This reveals the growth of Tibet's culture through open relations with other cultures and further cemented their claim to legitimacy as a free state with its own customs and traditions.

### **“The Great Fifth”**

Perhaps one of the most influential Dalai Lamas of foreign affairs and diplomacy was Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1642–1682 AD). Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso was the fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet and was nicknamed, “The Great Fifth” for all of his authoritative actions and scholarly work.<sup>14</sup> The Fifth Dalai Lama is responsible for paying the Mughals off after two events that involved military conflict. These two conflicts were military expeditions against Bhutan and the war against Ladakh (located in present day Kashmir, India), which occurred from 1679-1684

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<sup>11</sup> Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Ryavec, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet*, 86.

<sup>13</sup> Wylie, “The First Mongol Conquest of Tibet Reinterpreted,” 130.

<sup>14</sup> Jonah Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 223.

AD.<sup>15</sup> With the plateau in conflict, it was up to the leader of Tibet to ensure that the nation of Tibet would survive. In records recovered from this event, the actions of the Fifth Dalai Lama are as mentioned,

In 1679 the 5th Dalai Lama appointed the lama of the Tashilhunpo Monastery, the Koshut Galdan Chhewang, as the commander of the Tibeto-Mongol expedition to Ladakh. Galdan Chhewang first secured his flanks when he made a treaty with Raja Kehri Singh of Bashahr, granting him trade rights with Tibet.<sup>16</sup>

Tibet had not seen this type of military action in hundreds of years and because this was a joint coalition, there was a brief period of war that did not necessarily weaken Tibet. This resulted in the Treaty of Tingmosgang in 1684, which ensured peace with the Tibets and Mughals. Ultimately this resulted in Mughal withdrawal from Tibet. Even after their departure, Tibet was fragmented and relied on local Kingdoms to maintain regional stability. Around the seventeenth century, globalization had occurred through the major trade routes which spread across land and sea. This pressured factions to compete for land and resources. This led to several conflicts throughout Asia. One of these was the civil war that separated Tibet's main regions.

The Fifth Dalai Lama oversaw the foreign relations with other countries and cooperated with other nations. He also established decent relations with the Qing Dynasty with China during the seventeenth century in 1653 with Emperor Shunzhi.<sup>17</sup> The Dalai Lama spent over nine months with his entourage of 3,000 men traveling from Lhasa to Beijing to meet Shunzhi. With tradition shaping how the meetings happened, it was implied that the Tibetans would bring traditional gifts to meet the Qing Emperor. Of course, the meetings involved discussing future relations between the two nations. This worked well for the Tibetans, until communists gained control over China and looked west to Tibet to consolidate power in the area.

### **Western Involvement**

The select opportunities of contact with the West serve as an example of how the West regards Tibet. The West's interest toward Tibet's rich culture is, unfortunately, not as promising as one may think. There were a few representatives from Tibet, which met with the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to spark relations, that engaged with Western countries. One of these Tibetan representatives was a Bonbo monk named Adrup Gonpo, who was a guide for Tibetologist Jacques Bator, who surveyed Tibet during an expedition led by Adrup Gonpo in 1907.<sup>18</sup> Bator worked with Gonpo to educate Westerners about Tibet and its intense culture. While France did not intervene in Tibet's political affairs, France did gain an increased social awareness through Bator's published work.

Aside from the French scholars, the British Empire had extended its reach into Asia and viewed Tibet as a means to link their trading routes with India and China. Britain defeated China during the Opium Wars and gained control of key ports, like Hong Kong. Britain gained the economic advantage over India and China and wanted to further solidify their claims in Asia by

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<sup>15</sup> Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*, 223.

<sup>16</sup> Ram Rahul. *March of Central Asia* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing, 2000), 51.

<sup>17</sup> Berzin, "A Survey of Tibetan History."

<sup>18</sup> Schaeffer, Kastein, Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 704.

controlling Tibet. China claiming Tibet as a part of China and rising tensions with Britain, led to the formation of the Simla Convention.

With the 1914 Simla Convention between Great Britain, China, and Tibet, Tibet came into direct contact with western countries. George V from England, and representative of England's colony, India, visited the Dalai Lama and President Yuan Shikai, and established seventeen articles which the country was expected to abide by. The second article stated that Great Britain would recognize Tibet as being under China supervision, however the outer regions of Tibet were to be considered autonomous. It later states that China would vow not to send troops into outer Tibet and would respect the Tibetan government operating in Lhasa. The British would benefit by becoming the only power allowed to be in contact with Tibet, forbidding China and other powers from doing so, except under specific guidelines.

When the British began negotiations with Tibetan representatives, Tibet was introduced to the modern world. With Great Britain's experience with India, they had a strong presence in Asia, which gained them access to plenty of goods and valuables through trade. With India as a base for British troops, they were able to march into Tibet fairly easily. The troops invaded Tibet in small increments bringing machine guns and modern warfare. The British occupied Lhasa and purposed the Treaty of Lhasa in 1904.<sup>19</sup> This treaty meant that the British were able to help arm and supply the Tibetans once the treaty was signed and relations were established. Tibetans were supplied with machine guns, limited artillery, rifles, and other war supplies to fend off an invasion from China.<sup>20</sup> However, it was not enough for Tibetans to resist the Chinese. Unfortunately, the outcome was grim for Tibetans as the British withdrew its support when it was clear China had the military strength to dominate. Once the Simla Convention and 17-Point Agreement concluded, Britain did not involve themselves in Tibet's political atmosphere.

### **Modern Tibet: 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

With the end of World War II and the inception of the Cold War, China wanted to regain influence over Tibet to spread Communism. The Red Army of the People's Republic of China marched into Tibet with an armed force of over 40,000 troops, who defeated the Tibetans within three days. Due to this military conflict and the unfair treaties which followed, Tibet became a weak vassal state during the mid-twentieth century and held no authority autonomy. The last major treaty to determine Tibet's fate is known as the "17-Point Agreement" or the "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." One of the most important agreements made between these nations was that Tibet would be protected by China and considered a part of China, exempting the Tibet's autonomous region. The other points categorized and labeled Tibet as regions that would have the People's Republic officers governing the regions with the allowance of potential capability of military might. The 17-Point Agreement was the treaty that severed Tibet's foreign relations with the rest of the world, by giving China the power of having authority over Tibet. Because of this, the monks and Buddhist leaders in the exiled community in India led by the Dalai Lama, claimed that the 17-Point Agreement was illegal and invalid. The 17-Point Agreement permanently

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<sup>19</sup> Berzin, "A Survey of Tibetan History."

<sup>20</sup> Tuttle and Schaeffer, *Tibetan History Reader*, 230.

crippled Tibet's own claims as a sovereign nation because it allowed two other countries to dictate Tibet's regional role as a vassal state.

The United States embedded the CIA in Tibet between the 1950's and 1960's. This was done to keep communist China occupied with a resistance distraction. However, it is surprising to find that there is very limited information. In 1956, there was a nationwide revolt that resulted in the deaths of over 87,000 Tibetans, according to the Chinese sources from the Tibetan Military District.<sup>21</sup> Because of this outcome, Tibetans had little resistance to put up, as their casualties were too high. Furthermore, the CIA started focusing more of their attention on other potential communist threats. However, despite the limitations of Tibetans, Tibetans and CIA did succeed in a revolt called "Chushi Gangdrug" or "Four Rivers, Six Rangers." This resulted in the Tibetans pushing the Chinese out of the plateau for a few months.<sup>22</sup> This upset Mao and the other communist leaders at Beijing, so the Red Army came back with more numbers and reclaimed Tibet.

The United States stopped supporting the Tibetan Resistance Movement and Tibet in general. With the threat of nuclear weapons, Tibet was rather a pawn in the larger scheme of world events, as the People's Republic knew the US was involved in sabotage acts in Tibet. This was because China invaded Tibet the same day the United States invaded Korea.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Tibet was shut out of the international community's attention, and did not gain as much sympathy as the Korean conflict that had heavy US involvement. This in turn grasped the West's focus, due to it being a part of the Cold War after the Iron Curtain was raised. Once the Korean Conflict ended, Tibet did not gain international attention, due to the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War and Afghanistan. Therefore, people lost interest in Tibet's independence.

With Tibet in a subdued state, the Dalai Lama was not allowed to enter Lhasa or Tibet and cannot speak at the UN or with any country formally without China's consent. The Dalai Lama does go on tours across the West and South America to talk about Buddhist teachings concerning obtaining peace and happiness, but not political matters.<sup>24</sup> It is common to hold that most traditional Buddhists do not consider the Chinese Dalai Lama legitimate.<sup>25</sup> In the traditional Buddhist search for the next Dalai Lama, a team of monks scour the mountain ranges and try to find the next consciousness of the Dalai Lama before the current Holiness passes away. The fact that the Chinese government is centered around communist ideals (meaning atheistic or anti-religion), they do not seek to help the religion and its followers, but rather control and subjugate Tibetans to their own version of the Dalai Lama. This demonstrates how Chinese's occupation of Tibet led to Tibet's lack of spiritual freedom.

## Conclusion

I argue that as long as Tibet is in this compromise with China, Tibet will not have the freedom it rightfully deserves. In the present day, the Tibetan government is governed by the Chinese government, and the Dalai Lama and his followers still attempt to share their situation to the world about China's violation of human rights within Tibet for over the last half-century. Many

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<sup>21</sup> Schaeffer, Kastein, Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 608.

<sup>22</sup> Schaeffer, Kastein, Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 609.

<sup>23</sup> Tuttle and Schaeffer, *Tibetan History Reader*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Powers, *History as Propaganda*, 169.

<sup>25</sup> Powers, *History as Propaganda*, 168.



question why the United Nations has not helped Tibet to remain a sovereign nation. However, many believe that the United Nations finds it difficult to rid the communist party from the region. Others find issues in bridging Tibet into the modern world without destroying its cultural and social structure. The development of roads and infrastructure is the beginning, but that cannot be done without resources from other countries, which is obtained through trade. Moreover, there have been more efforts in strengthening awareness of Tibet's situation, but awareness has not resulted in action. With this as an issue, Tibet is yet again at a disadvantage as they are not able to help themselves and are caught in a hard place.

While Tibet may not be the most powerful state, it does have an impressive record in maintaining strong relations with China, Mongolia, and India, and deserves support in efforts of autonomy. History demonstrates that Tibet has acted as its own independent nation. Tibet interacted with outside countries and as a result, strengthened its foreign relations and country. Interacting with the Mongols helped empower the Dalai Lama and establish internal administration in Tibet. Although foreign nations limited trade, economic freedom, and social reform, Tibet is limited in terms of foreign relations. While it is uncertain whether Tibet will gain international sympathy or be forced to remain a vassal state, Tibet's leaders are communicating with the international community, proving to have more influence in recent years to demonstrate that Tibet is a country with a rich history and culture that should be formally viewed as autonomous.

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