Nation-building Politics:
Analyzing China’s Tibet in the 1950s

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Abstract

This article examines China’s nation-building in Tibet in 1949-59. While much of the current literature on nation-building politics mainly focuses on either domestic or international dimension, this paper argues that both are equally the two major factors. This paper defines nation-building process in a multi-ethnic country as an ongoing interactive construction between the ethnic groups and the state, which holds a certain nation-building narrative. Regarding the state-ethnic interactions in such process, this paper argues that the state tends to adopt accommodated policies when recognizing that it has more advantages than the ethnic groups; if not, the state tends to adopt suppressive policies. This article applies this framework to the evolvement of the Tibetan issue of the 1950s, considering it as CCP’s effort to build the Chinese nation in Tibet, with the narrative of “national territorial integrity and ethnic unity.” Examining the dynamic Beijing-Tibet interactions from co-existence to collapse, this paper finds domestic and international factors complicatedly interplayed. Firstly, in the Cold War context, PRC’s relationship with its neighboring countries and the CCP’s united work with the Tibetan traditional elites led to the achievement of “peaceful liberation of Tibet” in the early 1950s. This accommodation-adoption by the CCP led to its co-existence with the Dalai Lama’s government in years. However, with the implement of Socialist reform in the ethnic Tibetan regions which received the local radicalized resistance and the US started to intervene the Tibetan issue, Beijing-Tibet interactions got to worse. In March 1959 when the Tibetans highly fought against the CCP, Beijing adjusted its previous accommodation to suppression.

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Introduction

Nation-building has been a vital mission for the states in this nation-state system. Researches on it have noted that its practice involves in the development public institutions and political system relating to the working of governance. Its central idea, is aiming at uniting and integrating the citizenry with a shared value and a loyalty to the central government. In the Chinese case, classic literatures have suggested that the rise of the modern Chinese nation (Zhonghua minzu中华民族) was from the late 19th century influenced by the western challenges as “challenge-response” explanation, along with the transformation of Chinese nation-state. Moreover, some scholars consider this process more sophisticated and turn their interests in understanding how this nation-construction being operated in the ethnic minority regions.

Tibet indeed draws attention of academics, given the factor of the Tibetan issue. By the Tibetan issue, I mean the political dispute over the status of Tibet, which is presented in the interactions between Beijing and the government of the Dalai Lama. The bilateral relationship has shaped the making, modification, and the evaluation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s ethnic policies in Tibet. In some extreme cases, the legitimacy of the CCP’s ruling in Tibet could be challenged. Not only it has become a focus related to China’s local governance, it is also worth in-depth analysis regarding the political identity of Tibetans. Voluminous researches have provided detailed description of conflicts and the CCP’s policy-evolutions. However, academia is still short of theorization of the Tibetan issue. Therefore, this article aims to further explore this topic from the aspect of CCPs’ nation-building in Tibet, and re-examines Beijing-Tibet interaction in the years of 1949-1959.

When the Chinese Communist Party won the civil war from the Kuomintang (KMT) regime in 1949, the Party has claimed to build the People’s Republic of China (PRC) a united multi-ethnic state. The Party adapted the Soviet Model on nationality issue.

5 Leibold, 2007; Bulag, 2010.
6 I refer to the works on the Tibetan studies from scholars including Anand, Goldstein, Crowe, and Han, and expand their discussions to go beyond political debate to include both events and narrative of the PRC. See Anand, 2009: 227-252; Goldstein, 1997: x; 1998: 83; Crowe, 2013: 1100-1135. Han, 2013: 127-145.
7 Grunfeld, 1996; Goldstein, 1997; Shakya, 1999.
8 See the website of State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of the PRC. http://www.seac.gov.cn/col/col1110/index.html
and the KMT’s national narrative, in which it opposes the KMT’s assimilating policy with its Great Han nationalism but accepting its idea that the Chinese nation was historically bounded. Accordingly, it has recognized equal status of all ethnic groups in China, but denied the secession rights of them, given the idea of ethnic unity. The CCP’s narrative can be understood with the idea of Fei Xiaotong’s “cultural pluralistic entity of the Chinese nation.” Since then, the CCP has explicitly proclaimed to pursue the national territorial integrity and ethnic unity, which has been promoted up to the highest interest of the Chinese nation, and been the norms for the Party to tackle its ethnopolitics.

However, under the rules of the 13th Dalai Lama and the 14th Dalai Lama, most ethnic Tibetans did not experience nation-building processes imposed by the Chinese central government until the establishment of the PRC. Before the “peaceful liberation” of Tibet by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) that made Tibet an integral part of the PRC, the Tibetan government had resisted the central government since 1912. With the signing of the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (known as the 17-Point Agreement)” in 1951, the CCP can eventually impose China’s sovereignty over Tibet. However, after the turmoil in Lhasa in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled to India and established the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE) in Dharamsala. Since then the Tibetan issue has been internationalized. While China’s sovereignty over Tibet has been widely recognized internationally, campaigners for an independent Tibet still challenge this status quo. Assertions and debates about the past, present and future of Tibet exist in and beyond academic literature.

How did CCP employ its nation-building in Tibet? How did Beijing and Tibet interact in 1949-59, and what were the factors that influenced the process? This article aims to explore these questions. In the second part this paper suggests my analytical framework for understanding nation-building in a multi-ethnic state. In the third part I analyze the situation in Tibet, and focus on the interactions between the CCP and Kashag. The fourth part is conclusion. I argue that the CCP has adopted accommodation and co-existed with the Dalai Lama’s government in the early 1950s given the results of both sides’ external relationships and their interactions. However, with the bilateral interactions got to worse due to Socialist reforms and the US’s

9 Stalin, 2012: 11.
11 Leibold, 2007: 155-175.
13 Glaubitz, 2003: 87-100.
starting intervention in the Tibetan issue, the Tibetans turned to radicalize. In March 1959 when the Tibetans highly fought against the CCP, Beijing adjusted its previous accommodation to suppression.

**Analytical Framework**

Drawing upon the current literature on nation and nationalism and ethnic conflicts, this session provides an analytical framework considering nation-building politics. As a political unit and also as a symbol in the internationally nation-state system, nation in the modern period presumes a device ongoingly bridging the social diversity, increasing its domestic homogeneity of its citizens, and distinguishing itself from other nations. I regard nation-building of a multi-ethnic state as an interactive construction between the ethnic groups and the state, which holds a certain nation-building narrative. Both domestic and international factors are the variables to the state-ethnic interactions. Here, I suggest two nationalizing policy-adoptions, accommodation and suppression. Both address the perspective of the state towards the ethnic groups. I argue that if the state recognizes that it has more advantages than the ethnic groups when implementing nation-building, the state tends to adopt accommodated policies. If the state views the ethnic groups as threats, the state tends to adopt suppressive policies.

The reason for adopting a dichotomy of accommodation versus suppression as a way in examining the state’s tendency towards the ethnic group is that I consider this categorization as a clear manner to describe the state-ethnic interactions by the effects of domestic and international factors. In analyzing the empirical cases, this division can also help us to interpret the individual policies in different periods. From below I separately discuss national narrative, domestic factors and international factors.

**National narrative**

National narrative in the process of nation-building refers to a rhetoric ideology and notion that governing elites impose towards the national groups. As a nation is envisaged to be socio-politically and spatially integrated into congruity, it is argued that the narrative shows a certain stance regarding a blueprint and a direction for developing this “imagined community.” In the concrete practical operation, the

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17 Gellner, 1983.
national narrative can be written into important national declarations or be legalized into the constitution of the state, and functions as the core principle instructing the relevant policies and establishment of institutions. As a result, it provides a certain value and goal. In a plural society or a multi-ethnic state, the narrative can also instruct policies, strategies and tacit to unite the diverse groups. At this sense, national narrative can be conceptualized as a stable given guideline for the state’s nation-building operation, though political elites still have agency to adapt it.

The importance of national narrative has been recognized as it influences integration and disintegration of the nation-state. Some scholars have reminded researchers that making a nation is a process regarding complicated framing movement. Accordingly, the boundary of a nation is not given, rather, the political elites have to delineate the boundary among groups, and the national narrative that defines the border can shape and reshaped in the nation-building process.

In contemporary China, since the establishment of the PRC, national territorial integrity and ethnic unity has been the national narrative for building a multi-ethnic state. This narrative is repeatedly suggested in the constitution and the political reports of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC) as well as various ethnicity work forums.

**Domestic factors**

Academia has developed a long discussion on nation-building politics by focusing on domestic factors. Topics related to the establishment of public institutions, national identity formation, relationship between government and the governed and strategies how state achieves national integration, are the main concerns. According to the Modernist paradigm advocators, the appearance of modern society is a key factor driving the formation of a nation. The certain institutions in modern society that include the administrative systems of the modern state, industrialism, capitalism and modernity would bring about these radical transformations on economy, culture, intelligence, politics etc., and a certain group of people would form a identity as “we” and “others.” If this identity turns into a political ideology, it would further mobilize

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22 Kim, 2007: 462-465;
the group itself to demand powers and an identical commonality.\textsuperscript{24}

In Ernest Gellner’s view, when the traditional yet hierarchical agrarian society transforms itself into an industrial society in which the social classes of people gradually become equal, a shared high culture among all social members would form in order to communicate. Nationalism, as a principle of political legitimacy, will occur for homogenizing the culture and the state, make both congruent. The ruling class, in this context, will utilize this condition to legitimize their political powers.\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, Benedict Anderson contends that the dynamics of print-capitalism as a social condition in a modern society influences the conscious formation of a nation, which he defines as an “imagined community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”\textsuperscript{26} Likewise, Anderson argues that political elites can impose the official nationalist idea to homogenize the members within the whole state in order to create a nation. Such theories strongly echo the ideas of Deutsch, who views nation as a result of transformative process of social mobilization, in which building comprehensive accesses to effective communications for all social members is vital.\textsuperscript{27} According to him, the integrating and the relocating of economic, social and human resources as well as value system decisively affect the developments of nations.\textsuperscript{28} It is indeed from the viewpoint of the Modernists that the effects of modernization are ultimately powerful to nation-building.\textsuperscript{29}

Some scholars have further noticed the importance of the state-local relationship in the nation-building process at domestic level. They highlight the possible issues in terms of the state’s intention to nationalize the heterogeneous ethnic groups into a common nation. As we-group identity emerges within the ethnic groups, it is fair to imagining that not all groups immediately develop a same identity; rather, some groups would conceive themselves as another nation on the basis of the distinct ethnic characteristics. Whether or not the state is willing to accommodate the existence of the ethnic heterogeneity is an issue. The occurrence of ethno-nationalism within such multi-ethnic state is another potential problem.\textsuperscript{30} Therefore, in Kymlica’s view, nation-building should be considered in a context of majority-minority interactions in a state. While the state demands to nationalize the minority, the minority responses to

\textsuperscript{24} Smith, 1992: 58-80.  
\textsuperscript{25} Gellner, 1983: 1-32.  
\textsuperscript{26} Anderson, 2006: 6.  
\textsuperscript{27} Deutsch, 1953: 169-170.  
\textsuperscript{28} Deutsch, 1953: 189-190.  
\textsuperscript{29} Gellner, 1996: 366-370.  
\textsuperscript{30} Conner, 2002: 24-49.
state. In his view, this process can also be understood as an act-react circle.\textsuperscript{31}

The state-ethnic relationship and the state’s ethnic policies are thus worth exploring. In Horowitz’s view, the effects of modernization can be an important source for state-ethnic tension. When the state aims to integrate the plural society through employing modernization, the uneven distribution of its effects in the process can results in the antipathetic sentiment from the targeted groups.

In addition, academia has argued that regime types and the ethnic competitions for the state power have influences on the state-ethnic politics. Accordingly, the authoritarian regime tends to suppress the ethnic group when tackling the ethnic conflicts.\textsuperscript{32}

The degree of the radicalization of the ethnic group towards the state also matters. In a state in which political rights are unequal among the state majority and the ethnic minority, the minority tends to radicalize their requests.\textsuperscript{33} As an ethnic group highly radicalize, the state tends to suppress it.\textsuperscript{34} From the other side, Walter’s research echoes such perspective.\textsuperscript{35} He argues that a multi-ethnic state government has incentives to be tough to the ethnic groups when facing their demands of self-determination, with the ranges from pursuing territory autonomy to independence. In his view, a multi-ethnic state --- especially in which exists large sizes of populations with territorial concentrated ethnic groups, and compared to those states with few such ethnic groups --- has to build its reputation for future intent.

To sum up, modernization can be viewed as the key to nation-building. It is also an important factor for the origin of the state-ethnic tensions. Aiming to keep nationalizing the nation, however, the state tends to adopt suppressive tendency to the resisted groups as they radicalize.

**International factors**

There is another broad discussion which emphasizes international factors’ role in nation-building politics. Nationalizing state, its ethnic group and the external actor are claimed as three political stances that constitute a triangle interaction in the process.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{31} Kymlica, 2001: 49-50.
\textsuperscript{33} Cederman et al., 2010: 87-119;
\textsuperscript{34} Menon & Fuller, 2000: 32-44.
\textsuperscript{35} Walter, 2009.
\textsuperscript{36} Brubaker, 1996.
In this large body of literature, scholars argue that the external power tends to support the domestic ethnic minorities in a state and further leads to conflicts between the state and its ethnic groups. For example, the study of Wang suggests that the two movements of establishing an independent East Turkestan by the Uyghur nationalists in China’s Xinjiang province in the 1930s-40s were assisted by Japan and the Soviet Union. In his investigation, though the ethnic Uyghur identity formed in the late Qing, the ethno-nationalist movements occurred in the ROC period with the encouragements by those external powers. Mylonas also argues that interstate relationship affects a state’s nation-building policies. He provides a theory with regard to the policies pursued by a host state towards the domestic ethnic groups, as the triadic nation-building politics in a country. Accordingly, the external power as the third actor always supports the ethnic minority which has potentially geopolitical advantages in a state. Through its aids, the external power can weaken the state’s power. In response, the host state would take three strategies relying on how this state evaluates its domestic and international status, ranges from assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion, towards the ethnic group. His research indeed suggests that as the nationalizing state perceives threat, it would adopt a harder stance towards the targeted groups which has supports from the state’s enemy.

Though such literature has provided good explanations to specific cases, some scholars discontent such oversimplified assumptions that ethnic minority always intends to oppose to state’s nation-building project, and that international power merely supports the ethnic group against the state. Examining the US’s role in foreign countries’ nation-building, Dobbins in a research argues that external actor can play a positive role in the nation-building of a country. The US’s alliances with Japan and Germany essentially helped the nation-building in both states after the Second World War. Accordingly, the intention of the external actor, and the will and capacity of the state, should be taken into considerations. Widely reviewing the international assistance to the nation-build projects in 20 post-conflict countries, Dobbins and Miller’s research further confirm such perspective.

Regarding will, Jenne argues that an ethnic group’s attitudes towards its potential external patron would influence the radicalization degrees of this group. When

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37 Wang, 2013.
38 Mylonas, 2013: 5-49.
39 Dobbins, 2003: 87-110. However, by analyzing the US's failed efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Darden and Mylonas further clarify nation-building into two phases as nation-building and state-building, and argue that building a loyalty of local population to their central government should precede transferring coercive and organizing capacities. See Darden & Mylonas, 2012: 85-93.
40 Dobbins & Miller, 2013: 103-120.
perceiving that it is receiving the significant external support, even the host state shows high respects for the minority rights, the ethnic group will radicalize political demands to the state. Moreover, in Han’s research, he further argues that the political identity contestation is not only involved in the identity degree of the ethnic group, but is also engaged in other factors, e.g. whether an alternative identity option for the ethnic group exists. Through examining certain ethnic minorities which have transnational ethnic ties in the PRC, Han notes that national identity contestation does not happen in all ethnic minorities. While the Tibetan and the Uyghur show a higher tendency fighting against the PRC’s nation-building, such dichotomous conflicts on political identity do not occur in the cases of the Korean, the Mongols and the Dai.

Recently, by reviewing interstate relations and the ethnic group’s perceptions towards the external patron strength, Mylonas and Han further explain various policies that a multi-ethnic state pursues towards its ethnic groups in a nation-building process. They argue, if an ethnic group does not have external help, the state tends to assimilate it. If an ethnic group is with the help from the stronger enemy of the state, the host state tends to exclude this group; yet, if the help is from a weaker enemy, the host state tends to impose integration to this ethnicity. Also, if an ethnic group enjoys the help from either the stronger or the weaker ally of the host state, accommodation policy is usually adopted. This article is inspired by their explanation in considering the role of international factor in the state-ethnic interaction.

**Framework**

This vast array of literature has contributed to insights on nation-building based on domestic or international conditions. Much of the existing literature has argued that the degree of the mobilization of the ethnic group determines the state’s tendency to adopt a mild or hard policy towards this group. Scholars also note that relationship among the national state, the ethnic groups, and the potential external patron influences the state-ethnic interactions and the state’s nation-building policies.

Based on the reviews above, I suggest a figure 1 and a table 1 as my analytical frameworks. I will examine the influences of interstate relationship and domestic politics on the state-ethnic interactions, and discuss the state’s nationalizing policies. I also value the importance of national narrative, which provides a context for nation-building in a state. Figure 1 suggests the nation-building process in a

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42 Han, 2013.
multi-ethnic state, and table 1 states the state’s policy-adoption to the ethnic group in the state-ethnic interactions.

In figure 1, I suggest that nation-building in a multi-ethnic state is an interactive process in which the domestic and international factors play roles. The national narrative defining a nation influences the state’s goal of nation-building, and the state imposes nationalizing policies towards the ethnic group. Accordingly, the state will produce more specific ethnic policies to the ethnic group. While the ethnic group can act towards the state as its responses to the nationalizing policies, the group can also actively request rights from the state.

Table 1 State’s policy-adoption in the nation-building process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relations with external power</th>
<th>With external aid</th>
<th>Without external aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive/Alliance</td>
<td>Suppression</td>
<td>Suppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Configuration 1</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Configuration 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative/Enemy</td>
<td>Suppression</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configuration 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Configuration 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
In table 1, I discuss several situations of the state-ethnic interactions. I argue, if the state-ethnic interaction damages the state’s power employing the nation-building, the state tends to suppress the ethnic group, which is viewed as a threat by the state. If the interaction does not damage the state’s power, the state tends to adopt a policy of accommodation, and continues the nation-building. Domestic and international factors are considered in this process.

Here, external power is not referred to as a certain state, but as the relevant international actors. The relations between the nationalizing state and the external power constitute the international factors of the state. The relations between the ethnic group and the external power constitute the international factors of the ethnic group. The aid from external power ranges from humanitarian to military assistance, depending on real situations. Radicalization is referred to the degrees of violence towards the state. Accommodation refers to mild policies, from setting institutional co-nationals to assimilation in a natural process. Suppression refers to hard policies, from ethnicity exclusion to forced assimilation. The specific ethnic policies are not discussed in this table. It needs to be examined in real context for measuring the essence of nation-building policies. Below I provide 7 analytical configurations.

_Configuration 1:_ Internationally, if both the state and the ethnic group have good relations with the external power, the degree of domestic radicalization of the ethnic actor can be the main factor influencing the state-ethnic interaction. Scholars have suggested that even the ethnic group has transnational tie, the group does not necessarily radicalize its demands. Rather, the group may consider more factors, including the strengths of its external patron and the host state. Domestically, if the ethnic group radicalizes its demands against the state, the state tends to adopt suppression. The conflicts between the government of Myanmar and the ethnic Kachins, both of which have close relationships with the PRC, could be a relevant case.

_Configuration 2:_ If both the state and the ethnic group have good relations with the external power, and the ethnic group shows low mobilization, the state tends to adopt accommodation. The ethnic Koreans in the PRC can be a relevant case, as both the ethnic Korean minority and the PRC have close relations with North Korea.

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46 Han & Mylonas, 2014: 175-177.
Configuration 3: Internationally, if the state has negative relations with the external power or even as the enemy yet the ethnic actor receives aids from the external power, the state tends to view the group as a domestic threat. Accordingly, the state tends to adopt suppressive policies when the ethnic group shows either high or low mobilization. The developments of the policies of the Ottoman Empire to the Armenians in the early 20th century can be the relevant cases.47

Configuration 4: Internationally, if the state develops a good relationship with external power while the ethnic group does not receive the aid from the external power, the state usually enjoys more advantages than the ethnic group. We further consider the domestic factors. If the ethnic group highly radicalizes against the state and the state views it as a threat, the state tends to suppress it. The Spanish government’s policies towards the Uzakadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque nation and liberty, known as the ETA) could be a relevant case.48

Configuration 5: If the state has a good external relation while the ethnic group does not have the external aids, the state usually enjoys more advantages. Domestically, when the ethnic group shows low mobilization and the state does not view it as a threat, due to considerations for national stability and public security, the state tends to adopt accommodation policies. In the case of Quebec, the integration of Canada is achieved through the democratic bargains between the federal government and the provincial government, and the Canadian government implements multi-cultural policies.49

Configuration 6: Internationally, if both the state and the ethnic group do not have external aids, we further discuss the domestic conditions. When the ethnic group highly radicalizes, the state tends to view it as a threat and tends to suppress it. The conflicts between the Russian government and the Chechens can be the relevant case.50

Configuration 7: If both the state and the ethnic group do not have external help, we further discuss the domestic conditions. As the ethnic group shows low mobilization, the state tends to accommodate it. The interactions between the Russian government and the Tatarstans can be a relevant case.51

49 Knight, 1999: 209-238.
50 Menon & Fuller, 2000: 32-44.
Cases Analysis

This section starts to examine the Beijing-Tibet interactions in the 1950s by taking our analytical framework. It discusses the incorporation process of Tibet into the PRC and the CCP government’s policies towards Tibet. I argue that the CCP’s accommodation and its suppression in Tibet in this decade are the results of intertwined domestic and international factors.

National territorial integrity and ethnic unity (Guojia Tongyi, Minzu Tuanjie 国家统一 民族团结) is the CCP’s national narrative for nation-building. On the eve of the establishment of the PRC, on 21 September 1949 the Common Program of The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was passed as a temporary constitution.\(^{52}\) According to the Program, the equality of all ethnic groups within the PRC was recognized, and all ethnic groups were called for struggling for the unity by opposing Great-Han nationalism and Small-ethno-nationalism. The Program also provided legal basis for setting ethnic autonomous region, in while it denied the secession rights of the ethnic groups. Later on, such points remained in the PRC’s constitution of 1954. These notions directed the Chinese nation-building politics after 1949. Domestic and international factors that had potentials to damage this process would be opposed by the central government.

The two-track interactions between Beijing and Lhasa in 1950

When the CCP took power, Tibet has been targeted as it had resisted the Chinese central government since 1912. Before announcing the foundation of the PRC, in September 1949 the Party released that “Tibet is part of the Chinese territory, and the People’s Liberation Army would liberate it,”\(^{53}\) as the CCP’s response to the Dalai Lama’s government (Kashag) expelling the officials of Kuomintong government.\(^{54}\) While the ethnic Tibetan areas in Gansu and Qinghai have been “liberated” at then, and the 10\(^{th}\) Panchen Lama, the second ranked Tibetan Buddhist leader inferior to the Dalai Lama in the Geluk Sect, has showed his support to the PRC on 1 October 1949, the Kashag attempted to maintain its rule in Tibet (about today’s Tibet Autonomous Region).\(^{55}\) Out of the anti-imperialist and nationalist idea as well as the international strategy, the chairman Mao Zedong aimed at solving the sovereign status of Tibet soon.

\(^{52}\) Kang, 2013: 672-4.
\(^{54}\) Shakya, 1999: 8-9.
Though he considered the necessity of using force, minimizing its scale, taking over Tibet through political negotiation, as “peaceful liberation,” was still the main goal.

Understanding the complexity and sensitivity of military actions on Tibet, Mao’s strategy towards Tibet involved in multi-dimensions. Domestically, the CCP’s strategy can be viewed as “carrot and stick.” On the one hand, the PLA was trained and deployed surrounding Tibet. On the other, Mao sent the ethnic Tibetan Communists and monks to contact the Kashag, suggesting that the CCP would remain the current Tibetan systems, and urged the Kashag to send representatives to Beijing for negotiation.56

Internationally, the CCP aimed to prevent Tibet from obtaining the foreign aids. On 20 January 1950 the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson of the PRC publicly promised that the Chinese government would establish autonomous region for Tibet according to the Common Program; meanwhile, he contend that the government welcomed the Tibetan representative while would take actions if they refused to come. Claiming that this as a Chinese national affair, Beijing warned that any state should not help Lhasa.57 In addition, Mao sought the support from the Soviet Union. When he visited Moscow discussing the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance with Stalin in January 1950, Mao mentioned his plan.58 It was during a serious conflict in the Cold War, when the Soviet Union was competing with the US. Stalin realized that if the Chinese Communist Party could deal with the Tibet successfully, the Socialist camp would increase and further overpassed its influence. Considering such advantages, the USSR was motivated to side with the PRC government. Also, with the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, both the Soviet Union and the PRC had substantially become the alliance in terms of military, diplomacy, and many dimensions.59

Mao’s alliance with the USSR may successfully impede the wills of external actors to help Tibet. When the Kashag sought for the international help from India, the USA, Britain, these countries did not positively reply to Lhasa60. The Indian government expressed its sympathy, though, reluctantly provided Tibet with limited weapon as its support.61 The US government also adopted an inactive attitude, stated that it would

57 Zhonggong Xicang zi zhi qu wei yuan hui dang shi yanjiu shi, 2005: 10.
60 Goldstein, 1997: 42-44.
61 See FO 371/84451. From UK High Commissioner in India to Foreign Office, 5 January 1950.
take India’s policy into consideration. The UK government not only discouraged Lhasa’s attempt to send mission to London, but also told India that the UK would not support Tibet’s application for entering the United Nations as considering the possible reactions from the Soviet Union and China (at then was represented the KMT regime). Realizing its weak position, Lhasa turned to contact Beijing for negotiation.

Before meeting the Chinese ambassador Yuan Zhongxian in New Delhi, the Tibetan delegation again looked for the help from India, Britain and the United States but still failed. The delegation firstly met the Indian Prime Minister Nehru, looked for his assistance. However, Nehru did not promise any substantial aids and claimed that the Indian government recognized Tibet as part of China. On the same day, the delegations also met with the embassy of Britain, but were told that all affairs related to Tibet had already passed to India since its independence in August 1947. Subsequently when they went to the embassy of America, they still did not get a useful reply. The delegation therefore had to start to talk with Beijing.

However, the first negotiation between both sides did not go well. The Tibetan representatives refused to accept all conditions of the PRC and strongly debated with Yuan Zhongxian over whether Tibet was an independent country and whether the PLA could station in Tibet. Without getting a consensus, on 6 October Beijing decided to march its troop to Tibet; on 24 October the PLA occupied Chamdo, at where the Kashag lost most of its troops.

The PLA’s military actions shocked the international society. Moreover, China’s participation in the Korean War played a further role in deterring the international help to Tibet, and later this became a key factor in the process of Tibet’s appeals to the UN. When the PLA attacked Chamdo, at the same time Mao ordered the North East Frontier Force as the Chinese Volunteer Army to fight against the US-led UN troops with North Korea in the Korean Peninsula. Mao’s military actions in China’s eastern and western sides drew international attentions. Given that many countries were avoiding being involved in more severe conflicts in Asia, the Kashag fell into a further isolated status. Facing that the PLA was preparing for further actions after its military

62 See DO 35/3094. From Washington to Foreign Office, 22 December 1949; Lu argues that the US government’s attitude was also regard to its observation to the PRC-USSR relations. See Lu, 2009: 141-9.
63 FO 371/84451. From UK High Commissioner in India to Foreign Office, 12 January 1950.
64 Goldstein, 1989: 672-5.
65 Goldstein, 2007: 46.
triumph in the Chamdo battle, the Kashag officials did not form a consensus towards Beijing’s calling for negotiation. The Dalai Lama at then assumed his power, directly dealing with the political affairs and moved part of the Kashag to Yadong in case that he decide to flee to other countries. Observing the situations in the Korean War at the same time, the Kashag considered the possibility that the United Nations may help Tibet as it helped South Korea. Therefore, on 7 November 1950 the Tibetan delegations Shakabpa, went to Kalimpong and directly submitted the appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The interactions between Beijing and Lhasa then were involved in more external actors. The General Assembly of the United Nations was also becoming another arena.

Lhasa’s Two Failed Appeals to the UN in 1950

The UN discussed the Tibetan issue twice in 1950, but both appeals were failed, from the perspective of Lhasa. The key factor was mainly related to India’s attitude towards the PRC and the Korean War, which reversely damaged the willingness of major powers to intervene the Tibetan affairs. The PRC’s interactions with major powers were another important factor.

In the beginning the first Kashag’s appeal in November 1950 was denied due to the fact that Tibet was not a member of the United Nations, which only accepted issues raised by a member of Security Council or any country in the UN. With the help of El Salvador, Tibet was almost added to the committee agenda. However, eventually the appeal was deferred by the General Assembly.

It is understandable that the USSR did not support Tibet was based on its support to the PRC, which was not in the UN at the time. However, though the Chinese representative, taken by the KMT regime, condemned the CCP’s action, did not provide further assistance. The reason was in terms of a fact that both the KMT and the CCP shared a same stance that “Tibet is part of China.” The only thing the ROC’s representative stressed was that the PLA’s activity in Tibet again showed the Soviet Union’s Communist ambition to China. Therefore, the Chiang Kai-shek regime’s insistence on China’s sovereignty of Tibet and the Soviet Union’s support to the CCP

67 Goldstein, 2007: 57-60.
70 See FO 371/93002. General Assembly official records, 24 November 1950.
ironically led to the adjournment of Tibet’s appeal in the UN.

Other international powers including Britain, the USA, and India also did not support this appeal because of their own national concerns.\(^2\) The long-term standpoint of the UK government was that it only accepted China’s suzerainty over Tibet based on the condition that China recognized Tibet’s autonomy. If the Chinese government damaged the autonomy of Tibet, the UK government would consider its support to Tibet’s independence. There was a case in 1943. When the Chiang Kai-shek government threatened to bomb Lhasa for asking Lhasa to assist anti-Japanese war, London prevented Nanjing by expressing such standpoint.\(^3\) At this time, faced by the CCP’s military action, from the beginning the British Foreign Office suggested London to support Tibet. The Office had recognized that the PRC violated the autonomy of Tibet, which was pointed out that it had sufficient quality as a “state” in the meaning of the “United Nations Charter” by clarifying Tibet’s past interactions with other states in history.\(^4\) However, when the CCP threatened to occupy Hong Kong if the UK aided Tibet, the British government at that time concerned about its interests in Asia, given India has been independent.\(^5\) Therefore, Britain announced that it would follow the government of India on this issue.\(^6\) Consequenlty, when the Nehru government expressed its non-willingness to support Tibet, the UK government did not adopt the suggestion from the British Foreign Office.

The main attitude for Washington’s decision were related to its diplomatic relations with the Chiang Kai-shek government in Taiwan, US-USSR conflicts in the Cold-War context, and the huge cost if the US decided to assist Tibet.\(^7\) First of all, considering its alliance with the Chiang Kai-shek government, the US government could hardly support the government of the Dalai Lama publicly, given that such activity may imply Washington’s support to Tibet’s independence that violated its own China policy. Secondly, the US concerned about the possible reactions from the Soviet Union. At then, the US was participating in the Korean War and was battling with the PRC army. The American government did not want to worsen the conflicts with the Communist


\(^3\) See CAB 36/88/17.

\(^4\) FO 371/ 84454. Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to UK High Commissioner in India, 10 November 1950. According to the document, when the UK government would like to discuss this issue with the representative of China (that was, Kuomintung), the Chinese representative refused in order to avoid the independence of Tibet.

\(^5\) FO 371/ 84457. From Lt-Colonel A.M. Fiela, the War Office to S. J. L. Olver Esq., MBE, Foreign Office, 2 November.


\(^7\) Lu, 2009: 138-149; Han, 2013: 133
camp due to the Tibetan issue. Thirdly, although Tibet was full of strategic value for defending the Communist camps, the cost of paying it was too high from the viewpoint of Washington. Therefore, the US did not support the Tibetan appeals but only encouraged the anti-Communism of the Tibetans. Also, similarly to the stand of the UK, the American government referred to India’s attitude on this issue. When Washington consulted the opinions from London and New Delhi, and received their answers about not to support Tibet, the US further insisted on this decision. 78

Despite it did not support the appeals of Tibet to the UN at both times, the US government gradually built a further contact with the Dalai Lama. Before the establishment of the PRC, the Kashag had sent several trade missions to the US, aiming at building direct interactions. The US government at then expressed its respect for the Chinese territory based on its alliance with the KMT government. After 1949, the United States government did not change its Chinese policy. Moreover, taking India’s attitude, the US government did not show its positive attitude towards Tibet’s appeal to the UN in November 1950. However, during the second time when Tibet made the second appeal to the UN in December, the US government became more interested in the roles of Tibet by considering its strategic importance about anti-Communism. Inside the government, the officials went through severe debates on Tibet. Subsequently, the US government decided to unofficially support Tibet. 79 This decision became its following policies towards the Dalai Lama, and also led to the activities of CIA in Tibet from the mid-1950s.

Without doubt India played a vital role in the both UN discussion process. Despite the Indian government had close contacts with the Kashag and expressed its concerns about the CCP’s military actions several times, eventually the Nehru administration did not support Lhasa, thus led to the failure of the Tibetan appeals. There were some reasons for the decisions of Nehru. From his perspective, India and China had suffered from imperialism for a long time, and both sides should share this anti-imperialist ideology with each other. When the PRC was founded, Nehru’s government not only recognized the PRC but also built an official diplomatic relation with it in April 1950. In addition, Nehru believed that India could play an important role in the world affairs. As India was involved in the mediation in the Korean War, Nehru did not want the

78 G. S. Bajpai, the secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs of India, privately suggested to the US that if the Dalai Lama decides to flee to India, the Indian government won’t give him political asylum but individual asylum; The UK government also discouraged the US government’s further involvement in the Tibetan issue. See Goldstein, 2007: 114-137
problem of Tibet to create more severe conflicts. These attitudes influenced India’s decision.

In addition, regarding Tibet, India inherited the main policy of the British Raj, which recognized Tibet’s autonomy under China’s suzerainty. India expressed several times that it had no any territorial or political ambitions towards Tibet, and all it concerned about was to maintain its existing rights in Tibet. Beijing implied that India’s commercial interests in Tibet won’t be changed if India supported China. Further, India’s support to the PRC would reinforce the developments of the Sino-Indian relations. Hence, Beijing’s implications also led to the inactive standpoint by New Delhi.

The PRC convinced India that supporting Beijing would benefit India’s national interests. In a letter dated on 16 November, the PRC government noted that

“As long as our sides adhere strictly to the principle of mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India should be developed in a normal way, and that the problems regarding to Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with respect to Tibet may be solved properly and to our mutual benefit through normal diplomatic channels.”

This letter implied that India could maintain its privilege in Tibet inherited from the colonial period if it supported the PRC. From the perspective of India, the controversy over India-Tibet/China border issue about the McMahon Line could also be solved. Moreover, India expected that by its support, the PRC would admit India’s position on Sikkim, where has been invaded by India since 1949. Consequently, Indian government made a statement in the UN, saying that India won’t support Tibet because currently there was no better solution, and Korea was a more important issue. The British delegation in the UN subsequently also proposed that the Tibet Question

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80 FO 371/84455. From UK High Commissioner in India to South Asian Department, 30 November 1950.
82 FO 371/84463. From UK High Commissioner in India to Foreign Office, 7 January 1950.
83 FO 371/84463. From Acting UK High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Relations Office, 1 September 1950.
should be deferred, and this proposal obtained wide supports.\textsuperscript{85}

Through a unanimous vote, the UN General Assembly decided the deferment of Tibet’s first appeal.

Lhasa’s second appeal to the United Nations was discussed in December 1950, also raised by El Salvador.\textsuperscript{86} At this time the Kashag also sought the support from Britain, the United States and other countries. Some Buddhist countries including Thailand and Myanmar stated that they could help, but had to consider the attitudes of major powers. Due to the fact that the key actor, India, still did not support Tibet, the British government and the US maintained their previous standpoints. Although the US government at the later stage decided to further intervene the Tibetan issue, at this time its offering was unofficial and limited.\textsuperscript{87}

**Signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement**

While concerning Tibet’s two appeals to the United Nations, the CCP remained its “carrot and stick” strategy. On the one hand, it kept imposing pressures on Lhasa, claiming that the PLA was ready to launch more troops; it asked Lhasa to send the representatives for negotiation. On the other hand, the PLA showed their respects for the captured Tibetan solders in terms of religious and ethnic customs, and also showed a good discipline as good “Han people,” differing from the old “Han people,” the KMT regime.\textsuperscript{88} Some Tibetan Communists were also assigned to explain the Common Program to the Tibetans, drew the Communist blueprint to them, and emphasized that the existing social system would be kept.\textsuperscript{89} Faced by the CCP’s strategy, for Lhasa, the situation became very difficult. Substantially, they did not acquire international assistance, and the CCP had made their promise, the Kashag thus had to reconsider its policy to Beijing. Knowing that the second appeal to the UN was failed, the Dalai Lama decided to recognize that Tibet was part of China. He soon from Yadong sent a five-person representative team led by Ngawang Jigme to Beijing in March 1951.

The Beijing-Lhasa negotiation took place from April to May; however, the process

\textsuperscript{85} Goldstein, 1989: 720-736.
\textsuperscript{87} FO 371/8455. Telegram from UK High Commissioner in India to Foreign Office, 18 December 1950; Goldstein, 1989: 746-757.
\textsuperscript{88} Editorial board of “History of Liberation of Tibet,” 2012:85.
\textsuperscript{89} Song eds, 2007: 20-1.
was not smooth. The bilateral negotiations were based on the Ten-Point document which was drafted by the Southwest Bureau and Northwest Bureau in 1950. It followed the main spirits of the Common Program, and later on was added more articles during the bilateral negotiations. The Chinese government repeatedly guaranteed the maintaining of the current traditional Tibetan society, and Socialist reform would only be carried out by the Tibetan government instead of the central government. However, there were two main arguments between both sides. The first one was about the PLA’s station in Lhasa and the second was the future role of “Military and Administrative Committee” mentioned in the articles.

The Dalai Lama may have reviewed the China-Tibet relationship of imperial periods, in which practically Lhasa ruled itself while nominally acknowledged the authority of the empire. Applying this idea, therefore, he wanted to keep the self-rule of Tibet by conceding Tibet’s sovereignty to the PRC. Yet, from the perspective of Beijing, the core goals were not only about Lhasa’s recognition of China’s sovereignty over Tibet, but also that the PRC had rights to station the PLA to Tibet. In addition, by claiming to ensure the implement of the result of the negotiation, the PRC government aimed to set up “Military and Administrative Committee.” The Tibetan representatives understood the Dalai Lama’s decision of accepting China’s sovereignty over Tibet, thus they questioned the role of the Military and Administrative Committee. After a long debate and negotiation, on 23 May 1951 both sides finally signed the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” (known as the “17-Point Agreement”), including two attached files. According to these attachments, the Kashag had to carry out the agreement; also, the Dalai Lama could choose its residence in the first year of implementing the agreement.

The Seventeen-Point Agreement played an important role in the PRC’s Tibet policy. According to some scholars, this agreement provided a legal framework for solving Tibet’s sovereign status. It also confirmed that the CCP offered a special status to Tibet in the PRC state. In addition, the agreement left a flexible space that if the Dalai Lama refused the agreement and escaped to other countries, the Chinese government could interpret this action as choosing his residence.

The final step for Mao Zedong then was to persuade the Dalai Lama to accept the

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90 This committee did not be established later on, instead, the CCP established Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet Autonomous (PCART) in 1956.
93 Wang, 2013: 53-54.
agreement for further reinforcing its legitimacy. Aiming to keep the achievement of negotiation, Mao appointed the General Zhang Jingwu to Yadong to persuade the Dalai Lama. When Zhang arrived in Yadong, he clarified the points of the Agreement; besides, he transmitted the greeting from the Panchen Lama. After considering all the conditions, the Dalai Lama accepted the agreement and returned to Lhasa. This symbolized Beijing’s victory in unifying the Chinese state, and opened a new era in Beijing-Tibet relationship.

**Beijing-Tibet interactions after the 17-Point Agreement**

The CCP’s Tibet policies in the 1950s were based on a principle “cautiously and steadily implement (shen zhong wen jin 慎重稳进),” suggesting that the Party should actively socialize the ethnic groups step by step, and mainly should unite these ethnic leaders. This principle was consistent with Mao’s strategy of “peaceful liberation” and the gradual-integration strategy, through which the CCP aimed at uniting the Kashag and restructuring Tibet into the PRC’s national framework. As Mao commented on the situation the CCP cadres faced in Tibet, he said “currently we do not have the material basis for completely implementing the 17-Point Agreement, nor do we have the basis of mass, and nor do we have the basis of upper-class.” What Mao believed was that the conditions of the traditional Tibetan society were not suitable enough to carry out Socialist reforms. Given that there were distinct differences between Tibet and other Chinese provinces, Mao considered that Socialist reforms should be implemented according to the local conditions. Religion and the traditional values were still very important for the ordinary Tibetans, and the Dalai Lama without doubt had the utmost influence in the minds of Tibetans. If the PRC fiercely promoted the Communism while did not win the support of the Dalai, the CCP’s policies might not achieve success, even the party believed that its Socialist ideas could attract the people of lower-class. Thus, the best way for the CCP, was to cautiously win the support from the Dalai Lama and his government; meanwhile to introduce them Communism. Ideally, the reform should be implemented by the Tibetan leaders with cooperation from the Communists. Such model has been used in other ethnic minority regions. In addition, aiming at preventing the international intervention, the CCP sought for building positive relations with the neighboring

94 This principle was revolved from the principle “cautiously and slowly implement (shen zhong huan jin 慎重缓进)” which was proposed to tackle Inner Mongolia in 1947, at then the Party argued that Chinese Socialist work in the ethnic region should focus on uniting the ethnic minorities. See Song, 2011: 26-38.
countries, India in particular, as it extremely played a vital role in the Tibetan issue. With Beijing domestically and internationally dealt with the situations well, the CCP gradually stabilized its rule in Tibet.

Beijing and Tibet improved their relationship in the first years on the basis of the 17-Point Agreement. For Beijing, the agreement offered a legal structure for China to govern Tibet; for Lhasa it also provided a chance to fulfill its modernization. A great number of important infrastructures were built from then. The bilateral interactions in this time were basically harmonious, and the Dalai Lama admitted this in his autobiography. In 1954, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama visited Beijing attending the first session of the National People’s Congress. The CCP attentively catered them, and the Sino-Tibetan relations went to peak. As a result of the Congress, the PRC constitution of 1954 was passed, and the rights for the Chinese ethnic minorities to establish ethnic autonomous regions have been confirmed. The Dalai Lama suggested that he learned a lot of new ideas about China from this trip, and he even formed strong interests in Marxism that he tried to compare and combine it and Buddhism.97

The CCP and the Kashag co-existed in Tibet until 1959. Administratively, the Beijing-Tibet relationship was the central-local relationship; practically, both sides negotiated in many perspectives. In this period, there were conflicts between the Kashag and the Communists in Lhasa. The conflicts also occurred inside themselves individually. In the Kashage side, the officials still debated over the attitudes towards the 17-Point Agreement. According to the Agreement, the traditional Tibetan currency, military and national flag, could be remained. However, some Tibetan officials were discontent with Beijing’s degree of accommodation and the station of the PLA. When they realized that the Dalai Lama himself was willing to promote reforms in Tibet, they feared the existence of the traditional Tibetan system in the future. People Council, an organization founded for welcoming the Dalai Lama’s return from Yadong in 1950 and led by two Kashag members Lukhangwa and Lobsang, began to launch demonstrations to oppose reforms. In reaction, finally Mao Zedong requested the Dalai Lama to remove these officials from his government.98

Inside the stationed Chinese Communists, the political competitions between the Northwest Bureau and the Southwest Bureau occurred for gaining the local power. The attitudes towards Socialist reform, therefore, became an item that both sides

attacked on each other. For example, when Fan Ming from the Northwest Bureau proposed to divide Tibet for implementing the land reform, his idea was immediately opposed by the Southwest Bureau. In the end, the Central instructed that all local affairs should be at Beijing’s command.

These conflicts did not result in further political crisis in Lhasa. In 1956, the Chinese government passed the Decision of the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet Autonomous (PCART) by the State Council, paving the way for setting the Tibet Autonomous Region for the next stage.

In addition, the CCP still concerned about external actors’ attitudes towards Tibet given that the 17-Agreement has been signed. This was also related to the PRC’s international relations at that time. Since the early 1950s, Beijing has won the recognitions from its most neighboring regimes.99 The Korean War ended in 1953, when the tension of the Cold War slightly was relieved. The PRC’s foreign policy mainly followed the USSR, through which Beijing formed a good relationship with other countries in the Communist camp. In addition, The PRC established a good relation with India, which invited Chou Enlai to Bandung conference and introduced the PRC to Afro-Asian countries in 1955. Therefore, China’s major rivals, after the Korean War, were mainly the US and its Capitalist camp, including the KMT regime in Taiwan.

The Sino-Indian relations in the 1950s could be considered to be sort of symbol of friendship. On 29 April 1954, both sides signed the Panchsheel Treaty,100 which also known as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These five points include, “mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty,” “mutual non-aggression,” “mutual non-interference each other’s internal affairs,” “equality and cooperation for mutual benefits” and “peaceful coexistence.” Given that “Tibet region of China” was stated in the treaty, India officially recognized China’s “sovereignty” over Tibet instead of “suzerainty,” which was used by India in the past years. The treaty also suggested that its goals were to develop further political and economic cooperation, by which India expected that the Indian traditional trade agents could be maintained in Tibet. In reality, though literarily the Indian privileges were cancelled, its commercial benefits in Tibet remained.101

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99 The PRC built the foreign relations with India in 1950; with Myanmar in 1950; with Pakistan in 1951.
101 Editorial board of “History of Liberation of Tibet,” 2012: 286
India to participate in the first Asian and African Conference known as Bandung Conference in Indonesia, the Chinese prime minister Chou Enlai shared the spirits of “recognizing the similarity and tolerating the diversity” with all the participants. Nehru, based on the experience of Panchsheel Treaty, also proposed the international “non-aligned movement” in the conference. The Sino-Indian bilateral relationship at this moment reached the acme, as an Indian said: “Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai! (India and China are good brothers).”

However, although India was developing friendship with China, Nehru and some officials, in meanwhile, concerned about the station of the PLA in Tibet, especially at the time when its border with the PRC did not be demarcated. In March 1952, the Indian government established an intelligence plan aiming at collecting the information of Tibet, and it also began to build contacts with Gyalo Thondup, a brother of the Dalai Lama who just fled to India and organized the pro-Tibet’s independence movement.\textsuperscript{102} In 1952-1954, the Indian government kept collecting local information in Tibet partly through its traditional agents in Tibet and partly through its cooperation with these Tibetan groups. By having contacts with them, the Indian government could also prevent the anti-Chinese activities in India beforehand. According to Gyalo Thondup, he was not allowed to process any political activities in India, but he could collect local information from Tibet and cooperated with the Indian intelligence. Later on, after signing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence with China, namely, when India ensured that its trade agents would be maintained in Tibet, the Indian government increased its funds to this plan. Such development could be interpreted as that India was pursuing more local information.\textsuperscript{103}

In addition, the PRC built the official diplomatic relationship with Nepal. After the signing of the Panchsheel Treaty between Beijing and New Delhi, Beijing and Kathmandu sought for further bilateral interaction. In August 1955, their official diplomatic relation was established. On 20 September 1956, both sides signed “Agreement to Maintain the Friendly Relations between China and Nepal and on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and Nepal,” on the basis of the principles of the Panchsheel Treaty. Through this treaty, the Nepalese government recognized China’s sovereignty over Tibet.\textsuperscript{104}

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\textsuperscript{102} Gyalo Thondup & Thurston, 2015: 139-144.
\textsuperscript{103} Gyalo Thondup & Thurston, 2015: 148-51.
\textsuperscript{104} Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China.
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As mentioned before, the US government under the background of the Cold War raised interest about Tibet. Nevertheless, the US did not want to openly confront with the CCP and the USSR in terms of Tibet. Also, it had to consider its China policy, which meant that the US government could not support Tibet by claiming/implying it as an independent country. These factors led to the adoption of low-profile policy of Washington, which continued to oversee the situations in Tibet after 1951. This concern later formed the US’s regional anti-Communist policy under its global anti-Communist policy. Through the contacts from the resistant Tibetans in India and some exiled Tibetans in the US, Washington could receive Tibet’s local information. In 1954, the US government contacted Gyalo Thundrup, and through him, the CIA started to fund Tibetan guerilla. From 1956-1972, this plan provided them with training courses and weapons. After 1959, this armed Tibetan group moved to Mustang of Nepal. Above all, the Tibet policy of the US in this period was based on its previous China policy and adopted small scale aids to those anti-Chinese Tibetan organizations.

In terms of the UK government, it seemed that it did not want to engage in the Tibetan affairs since the signing of the 17-Point Agreement. However, compared to its silence, the majesty’s government still maintained its recognition on China’s “suzerainty” over Tibet, instead of “sovereignty” until 2008. The UK’s policy, as Britain embassy claimed to Shakebpa in 1949, was that all the affairs related to Tibet had turned to India. Hence, from the perspective of the British government, it may leave some space on the issue of Tibet while this issue was not occupying a major position between Britain and the PRC.

To sum up, in the first years after the signing of the 17-Point Agreement the interactions between Beijing and Tibet were moving further, and at the same time the PRC developed good relationship with its neighboring countries. However, there were certain factors under the current that gradually worsened Beijing-Tibet relations. First of all, not all Kashag officials supported the CCP, though the Party accommodated the co-existence of the government of the Dalai Lama. The conflicts between both sides

105 Gyalo Thondup & Thurston, 2015: 167-80.
106 On 29 October 2008 the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband in the statement publicly claimed: “Our recognition of China’s “special position” in Tibet developed from the outdated concept of suzerainty. .....We have made clear to the Chinese Government, and publicly, that we do not support Tibetan independence. .... we regard Tibet as part of the People’s Republic of China.” See Written Ministerial Statements in the UK Parliament: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm081029/wmstext/81029m0001.htm#08102940000010. Latest review 22 March 2016.
107 See FO 371/76314. HMG recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet.
did not thoroughly end but still occasionally occurred, in terms of the issue about the PLA’s station in particular. In addition, though Socialist land reform did not carry out in Tibet, the reform had been implemented in whole PRC, including ethnic Tibetan areas in other Chinese provinces. When the Kashag heard about the situation there, they worried about the future status. These factors commonly brought about the Tibetan rebellions from the mid-1950s. When some Tibetans were mobilized to fight against the CCP, the Party adapted its attitudes from accommodation to oppression.

The Lhasa revolt in 1959

The collapse of the co-existence between the CCP and Kashag regime involved complex domestic and international factors. The dual goals that aiming at uniting the Tibetan leaders, especially the Dalai Lama, and meanwhile promoting Socialist ideology in Tibet, were internally contradicted. On the one hand, out of the needs of united work, the CCP valued the opinions of these Tibetan leaders. As Mao pointed out that the CCP did not have the strong roots both in upper and lower classes in Tibet, he believed that building cooperation and making friendship with these elites was the necessary option, given the existence of the religious characteristic of Tibetan society. On the other hand, implementing the Communist policies was the main reason why the CCP could mobilise the mass to join in its side and won the civil war with the KMT regime. When the PRC government began to carry out Socialist reform throughout China except for Tibet, many Communist cadres and followers could not understand the party’s compromise. Rather, from their perspectives, religions and traditional values were the feudal products that should be discarded. Meanwhile, when the Leftist movement blew to the areas where include the ethnic Tibetan areas in the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, many local Tibetans opposed this policy. The Central thus always faced a dilemma either it should keep united work with these traditional ethnic elites or keep its mass line. In addition, knowing the conflicts in those Tibetan regions, Lhasa condemned Beijing that the CCP violated the promises in the 17-Point Agreement. Both sides furiously debated. Subsequently, the local Tibetan protests evolved into the widespread ethnic unrest, and spread to Lhasa; in March 1959 it became a large-scale revolt, and the Dalai Lama fled to India by now.

A dispute between the CCP and the Dalai Lama’s government over the Communist policies in these ethnic Tibetan population areas was with regard to the thing that Beijing and Lhasa did not share the same concept of Tibet. From the perspective of the

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Dalai Lama and many Tibetans, Tibet is not only referred to the area that Lhasa ruled in the pre-1950 (ranges about today’s Tibet Autonomous Region), but also is referred to the ethno-geographic areas (which includes parts of today’s Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan). The latter areas are the so called Eastern Tibet/Kham and Amdo. However, from the angle of the Chinese government, Tibet is only referred to the areas that are under the rule of Lhasa government. They argue that since the Qing dynasty, the other ethnic Tibetan areas have been gradually re-outlined into parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. As a result, the “geographic Tibet” in the ideas of Dalai Lama and the Kashag and the “political Tibet” referred by the Chinese government are in definition different.\(^\text{109}\) Given that both sides do not share the same images, when the Communist government started its land reform in these Tibetan regions, the Dalai Lama and his government doubted the CCP’s promise.

In addition, the ruin of local Buddhist temples in Kham and Amdo areas by the Communists faced the local resistance. As religion plays a core role in the traditional Tibetans, many of them could not accept the CCP’s attitudes towards Buddhism. According to Dawa Norbu, the aim to defend traditional society from Socialist modernization from the mid-1950s was an important factor for the origin of Tibetan revolts. The discrepancy between administration and ethnolinguistic division has prevented Kham and Amdo from the application of the 17-Point Agreement.\(^\text{110}\) Hence, the uneven effects of the policies from the CCP to all ethnic Tibetans not only deepened its tension with the Kashag but also had to tackle the challenged from the gradually radicalized Tibetans.

Meanwhile, some groups of guerilla were organized by local Kampas, meaning the Tibetans in Kham area, and later they gradually integrated into a group called Four Rivers Six Ranges. This group was soon contacted by the CIA, which under US’s global anti-Communist policy began to intervene in the conflicts and had recruited a group of Kampas for intelligence collection. The CIA promised to provide funding and airdropped military gear and radio and medicine. In 1958 when the national Great Leap Forward movement was further promoted in Kham and Amdo the local conflicts worsened.\(^\text{111}\) At that time, the guerilla largely increased its members and launched the regional turmoil. Hearing about these rebellions, part of officials in Kashag also contacted the groups.\(^\text{112}\) Later, the guerilla leaders met with the Dalai Lama by paying tribute to him, and asked for his leading in Amdo and Kham so these regions could

\(^{109}\) Goldstein, 1997: xi-xiii.
\(^{112}\) Zhonggong Xicang zizhi qu weiyuanhui dang shi yanjiushi, 2005: 111.
enjoy the same policies as Tibet had.\textsuperscript{113} With the aids from the CIA and tolerance even encouragement from the Kashag, this guerilla impeded the CCP’s local Socialist project, and tried to occupy mountains and villages.\textsuperscript{114} In response, the Central government raised the military deployments but did not further tackle them.

Having foreseeing the potential crisis, the Dalai Lama sought the intervention from New Delhi when he attended the 2000\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Buddha’s birthday in the end of 1956. He has heard about the Tibetan resistance to Socialist reform since the summer at that year.\textsuperscript{115} In his period of visiting India, the Dalai Lama was suggested by the exiled Tibetan leaders such as Shakya and Gyal Thondup who tried to persuade him to publicly oppose the CCP. The Dalai Lama was hesitated to staying in India.\textsuperscript{116} Receiving this information, Chou Enlai immediately went to New Delhi from Beijing and guaranteed to the Dalai Lama that the Chinese government did not violate its promises in the 17-Point Agreement. He repeatedly explained that the Central would not carry out Socialist reform in the following years. Meanwhile, the Indian Prime Minister Nehru also discouraged the Dalai Lama’s idea of staying in India. Finally, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa.

Realizing this situation, Mao Zedong instructed to cautiously reschedule the plan of Socialist reform in Tibet; this instruction was known as the “Instructions regarding Democratic Reforms in Tibet (guan yu Xicang minzhu gaige de zhishi 关于西藏民主改革的指示)” dated on 4 September 1956, also known as “9.4. Instruction.”\textsuperscript{117} Accordingly, the CCP need to keep implementing united policies winning the trust of these Tibetan leaders, and can began the reform only when these leaders are willing to do so. Mao’s instruction was endorsed by the Party and he subsequently officially announced the governmental stance that Socialist reform in Tibet would not be implemented in the following six years (known as the “liu nian bu gai 六年不改” instruction).

The CCP at this time still adopted an accommodated attitude at this time though the local skirmishes were increasing and were slightly out of control. The Party was to keep uniting the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan upper class, aiming to calm the turmoil through their influences. In the meantime Patriotism and ant-Separatism were strongly

\textsuperscript{114} Knaus, 2008: 127-159.
\textsuperscript{115} Tenzin Gyatso, 1990: 121.
\textsuperscript{116} The Dalai Lama, 1991.
\textsuperscript{117} CCCPC Party Literature Research Office, 2005: 182-184.
propagandized in local areas. However, the regional confrontations were more radicalized, and the conflicts gradually spread to Lhasa. As the violent degrees raised and the scales enlarged, the CCP at firstly instructed that the stationed PLA constrained its reactions. The PLA took an active position that it selectively suppressed the revolt which with potentials being further chaotic. If the uprisings occurred in Tibet, the Kashag was assigned to tackle the issue, instead of the PLA. By indirectly dealing with the riots, the CCP government aimed to avoid the controversy of central-local conflict. Also, it aimed to show that the central government was cooperating with the Kashag.

In March 1959 with a severe rebellion broke out in Lhasa the CCP government eventually adapted its previous policy. At the time, the ethnic Tibetan uprisings had spread to the center in Lhasa. There was even a rumor among the mass that the PLA planned to kidnap the Dalai Lama to Beijing for controlling Tibet as the he was invited to visit the PLA camp for appreciating a performance. Aiming at protecting the Dalai Lama, large groups of the Tibetans protested the stationed PLA and the central government on the streets. Meanwhile, Four Rivers Six Ranges, with the contacts with the CIA, allied with some Kashag officials and declared the independence of Tibet. Surrounded by these more and more radicalized demonstrators on the streets, the PLA troops reacted with force. The sporadic conflicts soon turned into thorough chaos around the city. Having no capacity to deal with the conflict, the Dalai Lama and his followers fled to India on 17 March. Subsequently, the PLA cracked down the armed demonstration.

The PRC’s international politics also played specific roles before and after the conflict. The US’s fund to the Tibetan guerilla has shown an obvious intervention. On the other side, the PRC’s international relationship with the Soviet Union and India needs to be further examined in the process of the conflict. Since 1958, the PRC had rifts with the USSR because of Mao’s rejection to the proposals of building of joint Soviet-Chinese submarine fleets and joint long-wave radio stations. The PLA’s military attack on Jinmen Islands controlled by the KMT that did not inform Khrushchev also caused the unpleasantness between Beijing and Moscow. Even though, it is noted that the USSR still sided with the PRC on the stance of Tibet at this moment, until Beijing worsened line with New Delhi after 1959. Besides, although the Nehru’s administration kept low profile, its provision of asylum to the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetans incurred

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120 China Tibetology Research Center, 2009: 32-51.
the critics from the PRC. From the late 1959, border dispute became the issue between both sides.

The outbreak of 310 uprising shocked the international society and brought critics of the CCP. When the Dalai Lama arrived at India, he immediately denounced the 17-Point Agreement, and declared the establishment of the Tibetan Government in Exile, which was officially founded in Dharamsala in 1960. On the other side, in China, after this collapse of the two regimes’ co-existence, Beijing announced to dismiss the Kashag, and replaced it with the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet Autonomous (PCART), which was established in 1956 and the Dalai Lama once served as its director.\footnote{Chen, 2006: 71-80.} Yet, the CCP remained the Dalai Lama’s political positions in the government, leaving the space for further negotiation.

To sum up, influenced by the complicated domestic and international political factors, the CCP government adapted its policy from accommodation to suppression. The central government’s hard-line attitude-adoption towards Tibet and the increasingly intensive military actions through all Tibet resulted in the national integration of Tibet into the whole PRC though, raised the alarm by India. Consequently, the Tibetan issue with the help of international society was not only sent to the UN Assembly discussing the situation of local human rights, but also extremely influenced the Sino-Indian relations and further the Sino-Russian relations in the early 1960s.\footnote{Chen, 2006: 54-101.}

\section*{Conclusion}

This article provides a theoretical framework to analyze the dynamic nation-building case of China’s Tibet in the 1950s. It highlights that international and domestic factors need to be equally considered in this process, and it recognizes the role of national narrative according to which the state implements its nationalizing policies. As an interactive operation, the nationalist elites in the state impose specific nationalizing idea to the mass, while the latter can respond. Specifically, this article argues that when the state recognizes radical threats from the nationalizing groups, it tends to suppress it. Rather, it tends to adopt accommodated policy when perceiving its advanced status.

I have applied my framework to considering the Beijing-Tibet interactions. Categorizing the CCP’s nationalizing policies toward Tibet of 1950s into Table 2

\footnote{Chen, 2006: 71-80.} \footnote{Chen, 2006: 54-101.}
below, I argue, due to that Beijing in the early 1950s substantially built a good relationship with its neighboring countries, India and the USSR in particular, while Tibet did not receive the international helps and lowly radicalized, the CCP adopted accommodation. This accommodation-adopted led to its co-existence with the Kashag from the early and the mid-1950s. However, with the bilateral interactions got to worse and the US started to intervene the Tibetan issue by limitedly aiding the ethnic guerilla, the Tibetans turned to be radicalized. Here, the external power is mainly referred to the US; the USSR and India at that time still remained friendly with the PRC though, the individual relationship gradually worsened. In March 1959 when the Tibetans highly fought against the CCP, Beijing adjusted its previous accommodation to suppression. The Dalai Lama has been exiled since then.

Through this examination, this paper has theorized the Tibetan issue and in the context of China’s effort of nation-building. It is clear that nation-building operation is not only related to the construction of nationalist ideology and establishment of public institution, but also importantly full of interactions and dynamics. It is also indeed that the international factors and the domestic factors may play different roles in different contexts. The Tibetan issue, influenced by China’s foreign relations and its domestic ethnic policies, by now still plays a role in the PRC’s nation-building and governance in Tibet. The interactions and negotiations between the CCP and the exiled Tibetan government deserve more concern.

Table 2 PRC’s policies towards Tibet in the nation-building process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>With external aid</th>
<th>Without external aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group high</td>
<td>Group low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>radicalization</td>
<td>radicalization</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td>Positive/Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Negative/Enemy</strong></td>
<td>Suppression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
Reference


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