

HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL
Topic C: Determining the Status of Tibetan
Sovereignty

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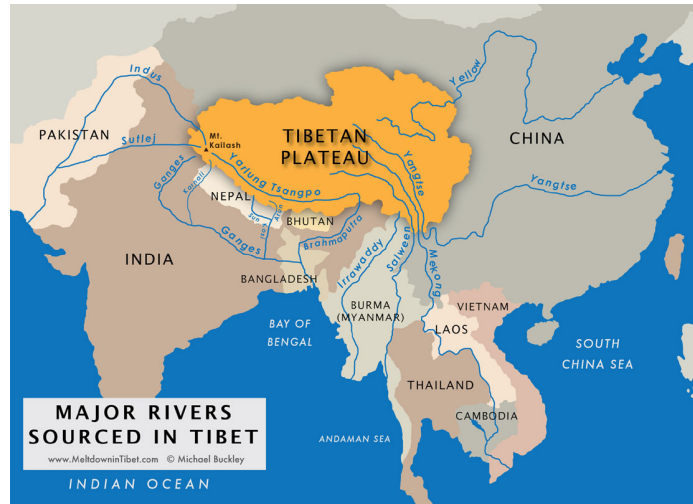
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Background Information

A Pre-invasion Tibet

Situated in a plateau region in the heart of Asia, Tibet constitutes Earth's highest region with an elevation of 4,900 meters. Its territory sits between China and Nepal. Its people follow Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism, a singular form of Buddhism founded upon principles of respect for



individuals, spiritual equality and harmony with nature. Its religion being carried out beyond the realm of spirituality, the Tibetan people take it as a philosophy of life that is implemented on every aspect of their existence. Ritual and prayer being integral aspects of Tibetan life, the land sustained itself through limited trade with India and China in a simple form of economy. The Tibetan people look to the Dalai Lama, the divine incarnation, as their spiritual leader and the country's ruler. There are two accounts of a pre-invasion Tibet, which are seemingly equally truthful but whose nature clashes. One is of a peaceful Tibet known for its love of religion and respect for its principles. This account clashes with the assertion held by China that contrary to this "mystified" version of Tibetan life before the invasion, which deviated from the truth that Tibet was a country made up of a feudal society with a cruel serf-system, resembling the life of humans in the Middle Ages. Thus, by this logic, the Dalai Lama encouraged this inhumane feudalism in the country.

The Invasion and What Came After It

The Chinese People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet in 1949 with an overwhelming army of 40,000. China claimed that it had the right to acquire Tibet's annexation to the motherland and that it had a historical right to govern Tibet's territory. In the Chinese provinces that bordered Tibet, China was already breaking its pledge to respect the autonomy of the local government made in the Seventeen Point

Agreement, by enforcing land redistribution reforms and repression of religious worship. This caused the Tibetan in these areas to rebel. Rebel forces quickly gained the support from Tibetans as China was gradually undermining government authority in Tibet. With threats to the life of the Dalai Lama, a rebellion exploded in full force.



Legal Aspects of The Invasion

It was held by both the People's Republic of China ruled by the CPC and the Republic of China that China's *de jure* claim to Tibet was legitimate and dated back to the Yuan Dynasty. This claim rests on the argument that China and Tibet were under the rule of the Mongols during the Yuan Dynasty, when the Mongols ruled China's territory during the thirteenth century and in the eighteenth century, when they were under the influence of the Manchu-ruled Qing Dynasty and therefore, in accordance with the Succession of States theory, the PRC's government inherited the right to govern over Tibet, the moment it seized rule of the Chinese Mainland from the ROC. Tibet on its part, claims that by examining the relationships between China and Tibet with the Mongol empire, one will find that they had distinct relationships which began and ended on different terms, thus it asserts that the claim that Tibet became a part of China ever since the Yuan Dynasty is erroneous. In regards to the Qing Dynasty that China has strongly referred to as a period that attests to Tibet being a part of China, Tibet argues that the relationships established by the Manchu ruled Dynasty and Tibet were that of an autonomous state seeking assistance from another state to consolidate its rule. No written evidence of the treaty that may have formalized this alliance remains.

In 1912, Tibet officially declared itself an independent state and until the invasion of 1949 had carried itself as an independent nation and it enjoyed *de facto* independence as it was recognized by other states as a sovereign state. China claims that this condition does not prove Tibet's independence from China since other parts of China also enjoyed *de facto* recognition when China was undergoing a period of

internal turmoil caused by the warlord's rule, the Japanese Invasion and the Civil War.

Chinese Civil War

China was reunified in 1928 by the Kuomintang (KMT), a national Chinese political party dubbed the National Chinese People's Party or Chinese Nationalist Party. One of its founders Sun Yat-sen took part in the Revolutionary Alliance which helped overthrow the last of Chinese Dynasties, the Qing Dynasty during the Xinhai Revolution of 1911. With the establishment of a temporary government, Yat-sen was proclaimed as the country's leader but he yielded his position to Yuan Shinkai for he felt he did not have the military abilities of a military leader like Shinkai. With Shinkai's death, the country fell into the hands of warlords with small armies that ruled that parts of China that weren't controlled by foreigners with the KMT receding to control in the South. Finally, the KMT rallied the strength that it needed to unify China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, forming the Republic of China (ROC) and it did so in its Northern Expedition from 1926 to 1928, when the job was done, China was "whole" again, ridden of the Warlord era. During the Kuomintang campaign up north to unify the country, Civil War had broken out in 1927 with the KMT party's forces fighting against those of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Much of China was now ruled by the Republic of China (ROC) and in the end of the Second World War (1945), Japan transferred Taiwan to the Chinese government, surrendering. Chiang Kai-shek had the support of the U.S as not only they had been allies during WWII, but his government was the last barrier preventing communism from installing itself in China. Conflict between these two parties had been ongoing since 1927 until in 1945, it took a new shape as Mao Zedong, CPC's leader had gathered grassroots support in different areas, seized stocks of weaponry from the Japanese supplies in Manchuria, a section of northeast China that had been occupied by the USSR until it was claimed by the CPC. The population was tired of the corruption and maladministration that turned many in favor of the CPC. The U.S sent in money to help Nationalist China to contain the insurrections but not enough to ensure they'd



prevail. The U.S didn't see the strategic importance for it to maintain good relations with China but contributed with funding for the sake of investing in staunching the spread of communism. In 1949, the CPC had won control over most of the ROC's mainland and so its leader, Mao Zedong, established the People's Republic of China (PRC). What comprised Taiwan's territory became the sole domain of the ROC.

Mao's Rise to Power

Mao rose to power combining Nationalism and Communism to unite the country after two Civil Wars. He studied Marxism and the Russian Revolution and decided that true power resided in the countryside peasants and that the industrial labor force wouldn't be enough to spark true revolution in China. In 1927, he led the peasant-driven Autumn Harvest Uprising. In the years that would follow, Mao gathered support in the mountainous regions of China. He built The Red Army, of 45,000 men. The KMT government tried to extinguish the Communist flame but to no avail. In 1934, the KMT's last campaign trying to get rid of the Communists took place, Mao and the Communists had to flee to seek safety and so they marched in what was called the Long March, a march through China covering 6,000 miles. That's when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was created. At this point, the second Sino-Japanese War began and Chiang Kai-shek focused on fighting the Japanese invasion. Mao and his forces also helped in expelling the Japanese from the country. By the end of World War II Mao had asserted himself as the face of the PLA and the communist opposition. He led campaigns against the KMT which, coupled with military victories, helped him take power in 1949.

The Seventeen Point Agreement

Tibetan officials were coerced into signing The Seventeen Point Agreement for The Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in 1951 that reiterated Chinese sovereignty over Tibet while it promised not to alter the established government set. The 14th Dalai Lama had sent a



delegation to Beijing to negotiate terms for a peace settlement. The Dalai Lama alleged that the agreement was imposed upon the Tibetan delegation, which was not allowed to make any alterations whatsoever and out of fear of a brutal full-scale occupation by the People's Liberation Army, the delegates signed the agreement even though they warned the Chinese authority that they didn't have the authority to speak for the government in effectively signing the agreement. China regards the agreement as a sample of mutual understanding between the two nations whereas the Tibetan authority dismisses the agreement's validity. The Seventeen Points were signed in times of duress and hence do not hold validity legally.

The Status of Tibet

The current status of Tibet therefore is unclear. Tibet had been granted some level of autonomy on paper through the stipulations of the Seventeen Point Agreement, but was still under the jurisdiction of China. Its local government's authority was under the Chinese government's as it



enjoyed the status of an autonomous province of China. However, Tibet claims it had officially become independent in 1912 and its assertion of being independent from China dates further back. China insists that Tibet has been a part of it ever since the Yuan Dynasty.

Delegates, time has frozen at April 1st, 1959, the Dalai Lama has fled the country due to the danger posed to his life and has arrived at India. The future of Tibet and the Tibetan people lies in your hands.

Timeline

7th-9th century - Areas inhabited by Tibetans begin to be unified and these people start to conquer neighboring territories and for that they have to compete with China.

822 – Borders are signaled in Peace Treaty with China.

1244 – Tibet is taken by the Mongols, though it manages to get some autonomy under the Yuan Dynasty.

1598 - First Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso (a high lama before) is named the Dalai Lama by Mongol.

1630s-1717 - Tibet is caught in between the rivalry between the Manchu and Mongol factions in China.

1717 – Lhasa is sacked by Mongols who conquer Tibet. The Chinese Emperor Kangxi drives them away in 1720 restoring the Dalai Lama's rule.

1724 - Resident commissioner is appointed to run Tibet during the Qind dynasty; annexation of the Kham and Amdo provinces takes place.

1788 and 1791 - China drives Nepalese invaders out of Tibet.

1750 – Chinese army contains rebellion against Chinese commissioners that “oversee” the work in Tibet.

1793 - China determines that the selection of senior lamas as well as the Dalai Lama has to receive its approval.

1911- The last Chinese Dynasty is overthrown by the Xinhai Revolution.

1949 - The People's Republic of China is founded by Mao Zedong and talks of Tibet's "liberation" begin.

Oct. 7, 1950 – China's leader Mao orders the invasion of Tibet.

March 17, 1959-Cornered, the Dalai Lama snuck out of Tibet in disguise.

30, March, 1959-The Dalai Lama has arrived and is escorted by government guards to Bomdila beginning his exile.

Key Terms

Succession of states theory: a theory in the practice of international relations that concerns the creation of a new state that comprises land of another state that existed previously and the recognition of that new sovereign state by other states. The acceptance and recognition by other states depends upon a perceived historical relationship between the newly formed state and the one that existed prior to it.

Self-Determination: a principle of international law according to which nations have the right to choose their international political status and their right to govern themselves without being subject to external interference.

De facto Independence: A latin term that characterizes the opposite of the term “*de jure*” which means concerning the law, “*de facto*” means “concerning fact”. The former is used to characterize something legitimate and rightful whereas the latter to refer to something that is a reality or “concerns fact” but is not necessarily lawful.

Seventeen Point Agreement: an agreement forced upon a visiting Tibetan delegation signed in times of duress, which renders it invalid.

Guiding Questions

- Does China's claim for historical precedence hold?
- Does Tibet have a right to self-determination?
- What was the true state of affairs in Tibet before the Invasion?
- Should Britain and other states intervene? Do they have the right to?
- Was China's occupation lawful and if not, what should the consequences be?

Further Research

A good summary of the legal debate that surrounds this issue and the implications of any decision:

<http://freetibet.org/about/legal-status-tibet>

<http://www.tibetjustice.org/reports/occupied.html>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/02/tibet-through-chinese-eyes/306395/>

A study that discusses to what extent Tibet was a peaceful country before the invasion:

http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-08/13/content_33225844.htm

Analysis of a pre and post invasion Tibet:

<http://tibetoffice.org/tibet-info/invasion-after>

Timelines of the issue:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-17046222>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/03/18/us-china-tibet-timeline-idUSSP11431020080318>

A short film that summarizes the events surrounding the invasion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsNbEEOkfGc>

Background on understanding the Chinese Communist Party:

<http://chineseculture.about.com/od/thechinesegovernment/a/Chinese-Communist-Party.htm>

Great contextualization of Tibetan history in relation to its interactions with other countries:

<http://www.suryaturkey.com/tr/component/content/article/2-blog/94-tibet-before-and-after-chinese-invasion.html>