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**Resolving the Conflict Between
the Chinese Government and the
People of Tibet**

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Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Issue: Resolving the Conflict Between the Chinese Government and the People of Tibet

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Introduction

Even though there is a long historical background about the question of Tibetan unity and territorial integrity, the Chinese-Tibetan sovereignty conflict erupted into a terrible conflict posing a threat to the lives of many people and rose to prominence in 1950, after the invasion of Tibet by People's Republic Of China.

Tibet declared its independence on the 13th of February 1913, with the statement “*We are a small, religious, and independent nation*” (13th Dalai Lama) and substantiated the proclamation of its independence with the Tibet-Mongolia Treaty Of 1913. However, Tibet did not receive official recognition by other countries.

China, on the other hand, contradicted the unilateral declaration of independence of Tibet by stating insistently that Tibet has been a part of China since the 13th century and is not an autonomous region. After the invasion of the Communist Regime of China, the oppressive regime and China's policy of meddling in Tibet's politics caused incessant conflicts between these two parties. Tibet's riots against Chinese governance over the region of Autonomous Tibet resulted in numerous victims until 2009.

“Starting in 1949, Tibet was invaded by 35,000 Chinese troops who systematically raped, tortured and murdered an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans, one-fifth of the country's population. Since then over 6000 monasteries have been destroyed, and thousands of Tibetans have been imprisoned.”(CNN-iReport)

Definition of Key Terms

Territorial Integrity: Integrity is “the quality of being whole and complete” (Cambridge Dictionary). Territorial integrity is a policy, which highly condemns the attempts to cause border changes of other nations and simultaneously encourages the protection of borders of nations against the external threats.

Unilateral Declaration Of Independence: “A declaration of independence made by a dependent state without the assent of the protecting state” (Collins Dictionary)

Autonomous Region: An autonomous region is a self-governing region with its own laws that is still partially connected to the country it is found in. Therefore, autonomous regions are not fully independent.

Tibet-Mongolia Treaty of 1913: After the secession of Manchu, this treaty was signed between Tibet and Mongolia, emphasizing that Tibet and Mongolia became independent states apart from China and that they officially recognized each other.

Seventeen Point Agreement: The Seventeen Point Agreement is a treaty signed between Tibet and China in 1951. Its contents include Tibet accepting Chinese sovereignty and China respecting Tibetan culture and autonomy. “3. In accordance with the policy towards nationalities laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government.” (“Seventeen Point Agreement-Article 3”)

Dalai Lama: Dalai Lama is the name given to the spiritual and religious leader of the Buddhist Tibetan people

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China: After the communist party came to power in 1949, due to the ideology of communism, territorial integrity gained importance. According to China, Tibet has been a part of China since the 13th century. Therefore, in respect to their aspect, China wanted to maintain its sovereignty over Tibet by including Tibet within its borders. As a result, China declared Tibet as a self-governing autonomous region. On the behalf of preserving sovereignty, China made claims on Tibet and stated those claims at the Seventeen Point Agreement. The main idea of this treaty was to maintain sovereignty and recognize Tibet as an autonomous region with its own policy and culture.

However, some strict demands of China as stated below caused multiple conflicts. “15. *In order to ensure the implementation of this agreement, the Central People's Government will set up a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarters in Tibet, and apart from the personnel sent there by the Central People's Government it will absorb as many local Tibetan personnel as possible to take part in the work. Local Tibetan personnel taking part in the military and administrative committee may include patriotic elements from the Local Government of Tibet, various district and various principal monasteries; the name list is to be prepared after consultation between the representatives designated by the Central People's Government and various quarters concerned, and is to be submitted to the Central People's Government for approval.*” (“Seventeen Point Agreement-Article 15”)
Enabling the establishment of the Chinese Military Headquarters led to China send troops to Tibet. This gave rise to the conflicts concerning freedom and rights between China and Tibet.

China's ideal of preserving communism and Chinese patriotism conflicted with Tibet's ideology of Buddhism and their peaceful social order. China stated its main reason of interfering with the governance of Tibet by sending troops as fighting against Western Imperialism in the region. For the accusations made by Tibet to China about killing the uprising Tibetans in a fascist way, China defends itself as protecting its authority and borders and denies any kind of fascist approach. China blames Tibet for separating itself from the motherland.

Autonomous Region of Tibet: Tibet is a region with rich water, mineral, energy sources and metallic reserves. Also, its geopolitical position (being a gate to South Asia and being linked to the Silk Road) makes Tibet special. Tibet has a long history and has been exposed to Mongolian and British invasions in the past. Previously, it has been a part of Manchuria. After the collapse of Manchuria, Tibet declared itself as a free nation in 1913. However, no other country except for Mongolia recognized Tibet officially. Until the Chinese Invasion in 1950, no other party interfered in Tibet's policies and independence.

Tibet is an isolated, peaceful, Buddhist region, which aims to regain the independence it claims to have had. China's communist ideology and military policy restricted the freedom of Tibetans and came against their social order. Tibetans, therefore, rebelled against the Chinese authority but their rebellion in 1958 resulted in the killings of many civilians due to the Chinese suppression. Since then, Tibetans proudly stand behind their ideology of freedom and Buddhism and object to Chinese sovereignty. No matter what, they fight for their freedom and request independence. Since the Chinese invasion, an estimated number of 1.2 million Tibetans have died excluding the Buddhist monks who sacrificed their lives in the attempted uprising.

European Parliament: On the 15th of June 1988 there was a conference held in Strasbourg, France, which discussed the issue of the Tibet-China conflict and introduced Dalai Lama's Middle Way Policy. At this conference Dalai Lama appealed to all nations, stated the attacks by China towards Tibet and approached China for negotiation. Dalai Lama requested the Tibetan Culture, people, social order, artifacts and autonomy to be protected and remarked that Tibet would stay with China in return. He also underlined that Tibetans should decide their own future and shape their own lives. However, China did not take a step forward and rejected this proposal.

U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus: Dalai Lama proposed the Five Point Peace Plan in this caucus. This Peace Plan states his requests to transform Tibet into a peaceful zone, protect Tibetans' human rights and Tibet's environment, terminating China's population transfer policy and production of nuclear weapons in Tibet.

UN: Even though this issue would have been expected to be discussed broadly by the UN, China vetoing the discussion of the Tibet issue prevented the UN to act and elaborate on this issue.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	Description of Event
February 13 th 1913	Tibet- Mongolian Treaty was signed and Tibet and Mongolia declared themselves as independent states.
October 1 st 1949	Communist Party was leading China and People's Republic of China was declared.
October 7 th 1950	Tibet was invaded by the People's Republic of China.
May 23 rd 1951	Seventeen Point Agreement was signed.
1959	Tibetans in Lhasa rebelled against the Chinese authority and the suppression of the uprising caused many Tibetans to die.
1965	China declared Tibet as an autonomous region.
1966-76	Chinese Cultural Revolution occurred. Tibetan Monasteries.

	and artifacts were destroyed. China struggled with economic crisis
September 21st 1987	Dalai Lama expressed the Five Point Peace Plan at the U.S. Congressional Human Right's Caucus.
June 15th 1988	Damai Lama introduced the Middle Way Approach at the European Parliament in Salzburg.
May 17th 1995	11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was kidnapped by China and replaced by a Chinese selected Panchen Lama.
March 2008	Tibetan Monks memorialized the 49th year anniversary of their rebellion against the Chinese authority but an approximate number of 140 of them got killed.
April 2008	The Chinese government was condemned by the international community for the deaths of the protesting Tibetans during the Beijing Olympics.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

On September 21st, 1987, Dalai Lama on behalf of Tibet introduced the Five Point Peace Plan at the U.S. Congressional Human Right's Caucus; however, China and Tibet could not negotiate.

On June 15th, 1988 Dalai Lama came up with the Middle Way Approach, which he introduced at the European Parliament in Salzburg. However, due to the negative response from the Chinese Government, no solution was found. The UN, unfortunately, could not negotiate with both sides due to China vetoing the discussion on the issue.

Possible Solutions

In order to understand the issue better and make negotiations between the two territories possible, a UN-directed conference could be held, including the representatives of the Autonomous Region Tibet and China. To evaluate the history of the issue, a group consisting of objective foreign historians, linguists and local research specialists might be assigned to conduct research on the history of the conflict. So, the solution should be based on understanding the issue from both perspectives and finding a way of negotiating.

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