

## **THE DALAI LAMA AND THE TIBETAN SOVEREIGNTY CONTROVERSY: A HISTORICAL CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to look at the discussions regarding the legitimacy of Tibet's sovereignty as well as the nature of its government in exile as opposed to the Chinese claim over Tibet being an intrinsic part of ancient and present day China. To answer these questions, I performed an analysis of sources related to the history of Tibet, the role of the Dalai Lama, the events leading to the exile of the Dalai Lama and formation of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Scholarly journals were used to provide a context for which to frame the primary sources used, approximately 40 sources were obtained from online databases and archives. The analysis was conducted by following the six-step method set out by Braun and Clarke. First, 2–3 readings of different sources were conducted, varying in terms of their relative relevance and hence importance to the analysis, to familiarize oneself with the data. In this process, relevant data were extracted and organized to facilitate the generation of initial codes in Step Two. Through the comparison of the codes, the relevant data were grouped under various categories in Step Three. Step Four involved a critical step of matching the categories to the grouped data in order to ensure that the latter was representative. In Step Five, the categories were carefully defined or labelled to constitute themes. With the final step, the themes were situated within the context of the current literature.

### **1. Introduction**

Tibetan sovereignty has been an issue of contention between the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (GIL) in India and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) — the ruling authority of China — since 1950 when the latter came to power. However, China's claim of authority over Tibet has its origins that extend as far back as the days of Imperial China.

Today, the focus of this dispute is centred on the position of the Dalai Lama particularly his right to appoint successors and approve reincarnation. It is important to highlight that political ideals

and philosophy are inextricably interwoven with religious ones in Tibetan values and practice.<sup>1</sup>This is why the Dalai Lama holds such a venerable position in Tibetan culture. The Dalai Lamas are believed to be *bodhisattvas* — enlightened beings who are the reincarnation of *Avalokitesvara*, the Buddhist personification of compassion. They are reborn solely to support humans in finding their humanity and breaking the cycle of suffering.<sup>2</sup> As such, generations of Dalai Lama have occupied a deeply-entrenched leadership role since 1642.<sup>3</sup>Even when the 14th Dalai Lama implemented the unprecedented move of retiring in March 2011 and redirected the powers of his role to the elected Prime Minister of the Tibetan GIL, he has continued to assert his authority over the choosing of the successor, that is, the approval of the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama.<sup>4</sup>The Dalai Lama's stance is diametrically opposite to that of the Chinese authority. Its position is that the CCP possesses the only legitimate control over the title and choice of successor.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, any action to name a successor by any other person or entity would be an illegal act.<sup>6</sup>In response to the Chinese mandate, the Dalai Lama in 2007 openly proclaimed his decision leaning away from reincarnation altogether, following which he reiterated that he would "be reborn outside of China's control".<sup>7</sup> In 2011, post relinquishing his endorsed political role within the structures of the Tibetan Government in Exile, he admonished the use of his succession for political gain to any extent. A repeated episode of events in 2015 had The Dalai Lama recapitulate his castigation of the Chinese government's acclaim of choosing his successor pointing towards his desire not to reincarnate. China's rebuttal entailed considering the statements made by the Dalai Lama sacrilege, this opinion was voiced by Padma Choling, the autonomous region's Chinese-appointed governor, wherein he guarded Beijing's right to appoint the Dalai Lama's successor.<sup>8</sup>

Giving due reverence to either authority, the most likely outcome would be the commissioning of a successor beyond the confines of the Tibetan populace, the Dalai Lama therein strengthened this inference when he stated "If I die in the near future, and the Tibetan people want another reincarnation, a fifteenth Dalai Lama, while we are still outside Tibet, my reincarnation will definitely appear outside Tibet. Because the very purpose of the incarnation is to fulfil the work that has been started by the previous life".<sup>9</sup>This paper reflects upon the Dalai Lama in his capacity, the prelude of his exile as well as the creation of the Tibetan GiE, touching upon the development of both Chinese and Tibetan stand, scouring the widespread notions promulgated by supporters on either side of the conflict. Finally, the paper delves into postulations describing Tibet's historical stature in counter to the prevalent historical record. The paper will go on to review the Dalai Lama's role and the inherent historical facts that form the basis of the Tibetan political crisis.

## **2. Background**

Tibet's status has been the central focal point for all concerned over the past hundred years. In spite of varied announcements over the years, the bane of the issue has always been reserved to the stance held by Tibet and China respectively, with the Chinese assertion of Tibet being an integral part of China while Tibet's being that of an independent dominion. Keeping this in mind, the actuality of the presiding conflict is that of a discord over history, giving equalled significance to assertions over demography, economy, culture and human rights. Chinese writers and political figures claim Tibet to be an integral part of China, doing so on the basis of history.<sup>10</sup> A prominent Chinese spokesperson formulated this issue wholly: "Is Tibet, after all, a part of China?" History says it is."<sup>11</sup> A volume published in 1986 by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences titled with a rough translation "Tibet Is an Inseparable Part of China" inescapably isolates the Chinese narrative of Tibet's status referencing historical documentation, iterating entirely elucidations of extracts from Chinese historical resources.<sup>12</sup> In opposition, Tibetans promulgate Tibet's independence by virtue of historical evidence, inclusive of language, culture and history, often which is a standpoint of divide between Tibet and China.<sup>13</sup>

This lends significance to the anchor of this paper being history, not overshadowing a variety of composites important to the topic of conflict of Tibet's status, but by ushering in the underlying question of the resolution of this conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Tibet.

This paper will examine positions adopted on the different sides of the divide over Tibet. It will set out some of the basic arguments made by Chinese writers and polemicists, in official and semi-official publications. It will examine what a variety of Tibetan and pro-Tibetan writers and figures posit as the historical case for Tibet. Additionally, it will discuss some elements of the historical record apart from the arguments advanced by advocates of one or the other side. Finally, it will explore the significance and implications of the debate within a larger context.

### **3. Scrutiny of Tibet's Historical Status**

In the battle for historical accuracy, the stance of the Chinese has always been prevalent in their assertion of Tibet's status bound by the confines of China, the following statement is one of many examples presented by the Chinese in their decisive argument: "As is known to all, Tibet has, since the 13th century, been an inalienable part of China's territory."<sup>14</sup> Such a statement casts a shadow over the prevailing current day scenario when it comes to serving up proof to back the Chinese stance on Tibet, while the Chinese may rely on their understanding of historical events; their argument lacks substance on refurbishing the events of the past that they reply upon. It would be important to highlight that the differing opinions of China and Tibet only arose in the latter half of the twentieth century.

To summarise the debate, the crux of the issue boils down to one main factor, the legitimacy of history in establishing the aptness of the claim that Tibet was indeed incorporated into the People's Republic of China. And so, discussions of the Tibet issue turn back to the question: Was Tibet historically a part of China?

#### **4. The Development of the Chinese Position**

The contretemps over the past century about Tibet's inclusion within the dominion of the Chinese empire can be traced back up until this time period; however a comprehensive case study documented and presented by China incorporates a series of publications and documents to shoulder their claim, over the past twenty years.<sup>15</sup>

In the era of imperial dynastic rule in China, there was an underlying recognition of Tibet being a subject of the Qing dynasty. However, the outright character that defined the relationship between Tibet and the Qing dynasty was left open ended, which made Tibet an issue of discord between the Qing with Russia and Britain.

British officials and writers tended to refer consistently to Qing dominance as a form of "suzerainty," a term whose vagueness came to bedevil later interpretations of Sino-Tibetan relations.<sup>16</sup> Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India at the time, was quick to disregard the inclusion of Tibet under the aegis of the Qing, however keeping British India's interest as a priority. Curzon upheld the security of India's borders to secure India in the advent of any concerns arising from Tibet, more in particular to any threat from Russia's attentiveness to Central Asia.

This entailed involving Britain's active influence in the conductance of several agreements and treaties which encompassed the relationship between Tibet and China.<sup>17</sup>

Present-day Chinese treatments of and statements on the status of Tibet do not give any primary weight to these agreements, given that they are, in the eyes of modern Chinese, the products of an era in which China was reduced to a semi-colony by imperialist aggression.<sup>18</sup>

The contemporary narrative involving Tibet's ties to China in the historical aspect was brought to light only once the People's Republic of China was substantiated. China however, had attempted to address the issue of Tibet at the time when the PRC had considerable influence over the Chinese mainland (1911-1949). In effect at the Shimla conference of 1913-1914, an attempt of negotiations were carried out with respect to the Tibetan conflict wherein Chinese representation promulgated the Chinese stance on the topic of the status of Tibet within the purview of their records of history. The Chinese delegation submitted to the conference on October 30, 1913, its position that Tibet had been incorporated into the Mongol Empire in 1206 and remained in this relationship (i.e., that of an imperial dominion) to China during the Ming

period (1368-1644). Significantly, the Chinese statement elaborates on the aftermath of the Gurkha invasion of Tibet, which resulted in the Tibeto-Nepalese War of 1792-94:

“so powerless and helpless were the Tibetans that they again went to China for assistance. To their supplication China responded at once by sending over 50,000 soldiers to Tibet; and accordingly the Gurkhas were driven out of the country. Tibet was then definitely placed under the sovereignty of China.”<sup>19</sup>

This primitive assertion was maintained in the time period of the Chinese Republic, however inclusive of disparity in the stance upheld. The Chinese authors’ claim of Tibet’s inclusion within China remained, however this assertion leaned towards Tibet having liege homage to the Qing as opposed to the current narrative of Tibet being an integral part of China.<sup>20</sup> This assertion was considered de facto in spite of a lack of representation supported by anthropological or biological evidence, considering excerpts from the annals of Sun Yat-sen as licit evidence. Tibet thereafter escaped any impending threats as China was plunged in war which disallowed their assertion over the inclusion of Tibet. Britain continued to pay lip service to the notion of China having rights to a sort of impotent "suzerainty" over Tibet, but the very vagueness of that term allowed for it to be left undefined, unspecified, and ultimately easily ignored.<sup>21</sup>

The most significant chain of events that rallied transposition in the status quo was the resilience of the armed forces of the PRC who had endured an elongated period of war. For the first time since the dissolution of the Qing, the formation of the People’s Republic enabled China to assert their ascendancy over Tibet. The established governance of the PRC now found a reignited vigour to establish their justification of Tibet’s inclusion with relevant proof to back their claim. This resulted in the rendering of the claim that is now prevalent: the attestation of Tibet’s inclusion to China during the period of the Mongol Empire when the Mongol rulers of China united Tibet and China. The desideratum of the Chinese stance on Tibet only evolved after a considerable lapse of time post the establishment of the PRC, particularly when international scrutiny prevailed over the Tibetan issue.

Official pronouncements at the time of Tibet's incorporation into the PRC in 1951 noted that Tibet had been a part of China for centuries but were otherwise unspecific about the details.<sup>22</sup> The year 1950 gave way to aggressive progression on formulating a more concise version of the Chinese stand. The new People’s Republic of China inherited the narrative from their counterparts from the Republican era and strengthened their opinion of Tibet’s inclusion to China during the time of the Qing. The Tibet issue received recognition by the international community in 1959 wherein this topic of discussion was addressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. As a result of conflict in Lhasa, the international community was awakened to the Tibet issue which then spurred the Chinese government to set the precedence on their

stance on Tibet via a commonly known volume *Concerning the Question of Tibet*. Within that volume the narrative of Tibetan history approached its current form. *Concerning the Question of Tibet* states clearly that "[t]he historical record proves that Tibet, during its long history, has never been an independent country, but a part of China."<sup>23</sup>The Chinese stand clearly upheld the magisterial state of Tibet to be inclusive of the Chinese empire from the seventh to the ninth century, to support their argument; the material produced by the Chinese claimed Tibetan rulers were obligated to legitimise their titles conceding to the authority of Tang China. Some of the other evidence presented was the symbol of unity between China and Tibet in the form of a monument upon which the Sino-Tibetan treaty of 821-822 was inscribed. Along with this, the Tibetan emperor Khri-gtsug Ide-btsan is pointedly quoted as asserting that Tibet and Tang China constituted one family.<sup>24</sup>*Concerning the Question of Tibet* chronicles the following:

*"[t]he chaos in Tibet was brought to an end and unity was achieved when Mongko, Emperor Hsien Tsung of the Yuan dynasty, sent an armed force to Tibet in 1253. Tibet was then incorporated into the Yuan Empire and it has been a part of the territory of China ever since."*<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese reiterated in their response to the events of 1959, their cemented stand towards the Tibet issue, they acclaimed Tibet's subjection to China from the seventh to thirteenth century following which this status quo was maintained, thereby maintaining the narrative of Tibet's inclusion to China during the Yuan period (1271-1368) and has been an integral part ever since. As now structured, the narrative has Tibetans and Chinese growing together from the Tang period (618-907) onward, with Tibet becoming an integral part of China during the era of Mongol rule a status it has maintained until the present.<sup>26</sup>

## **5. The Development of the Tibetan Position**

The Tibetan stance on their relationship with China is meagrely documented in comparison with its Chinese counterpart; it is evident that the exiled community of Tibetans have not promulgated a collective and strategic dissuasive stance towards the Chinese narrative on the Tibet issue. The Tibetan archives have differing accounts of sections of time recorded when Tibet finally fell under PRC domination.

The use of the English language now comes into the spotlight. Tibetans heavily relied upon resource materials transcribed in the English lexicon, much of the arguments put forward by the Tibetans are also conducted in the English language, the large historical account of Tibet by Risis-dpon Zhwa-sgab-pa Dbang-phyug bde-ldan drew extensively on Tibetan historical sources, many quite rare at the time it was written. Yet even that account was originally published in a shortened English version years before the fuller two-volume Tibetan text appeared.<sup>27</sup>The predominance of the English language for the Tibetans is resultant of their exile to India where

English is the prescribed language for modern scholarship and research. This has unfortunately relegated Tibet's stance to heavily rely upon English-language source materials as opposed to Tibetan-language source materials unlike the Chinese who put forward an array of Chinese-language source materials while asserting their arguments. The paucity of Tibetan language source materials, along with a lacking clarity which formulates the Tibetan position, the Chinese have contrastingly adhered to putting forwards a narrative constituting an empirical annotation of events for example, Tibet's incorporation into China in the Yuan period. However, the Tibetan delegation to the Shimla conference of 1913-14 is well known for having attended armed with substantive Tibetan literary and archival evidence concerning both Tibet's status and its boundaries.<sup>28</sup>

Post the Shimla conference however, Tibet's stance on its sovereignty dwindled in specificity to its relationship with China precluding the year 1949. A significant factor emphasising Tibet's claim to its independent status would be the recognition of the Tibeto-Sino relationship as "priest-patron", the Tibetan term being mchod-yon. The Tibetans assert this Buddhist phrase in incomparable to the western understanding of sovereignty and seemingly Tibet's wilful assertion of their independent state is this notion at its crux. As discussed, the Tibetan delegation's remarks at the Shimla conference in 1913-1914, ascertained Tibet's stance of being an independent sovereign state, an investigative narrative by the Tibetans concluded the extent of Tibet's territories and frontiers. As to whether it had been a vassal state or not under the Qing, the Tibetan representative, in a statement dated October 10, 1913, contended that "*Tibet and China have never been under each other and will never associate with each other in [the] future.*"<sup>29</sup> The Chinese representative responded with his own statement on October 30, proposing a settlement that would require agreement that "*Tibet forms an integral part of the territory of Republic of China*".<sup>30</sup> The definition of "integral part" was tainted by the concessions that China accepted to forego: Tibet would not be converted into a Chinese province and would conduct its foreign and military affairs under Chinese guidance.<sup>31</sup>

At the Shimla conference, a snippet from Tibet's compiled statement addressed the concept of mchod-yon in reference to the Sino-Tibeto relationship:

*The relations between the Manchu Emperor and the Protector, Dalai Lama the fifth, became like that of the disciple towards the teacher. The sole aim of the then Government of China being to earn merits for this and the next life, they helped and honoured the successive Dalai Lamas and treated the monks of all the monasteries with respect. Thus friendship united the two countries like the members of the same family. The Tibetans took no notice of their boundary with China for they thought that the actions of the latter were all meant for the good of Tibet.*<sup>32</sup>

Another reference to the mchod-yon was asserted by the Dalai Lama in his letter to the United Nations on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1950, as a desperate plea to the international community when the PLA had commenced their approach into Tibetan borders which was under the administration of the government held by the Dalai Lama:

*The Chinese, however, in their natural urge for expansion, have wholly misconstrued the significance of the time of friendship and inter-dependence that existed between China and Tibet as between neighbours. To them China was suzerain and Tibet a vassal State. It is this which first aroused legitimate apprehension in the mind of Tibet regarding China's designs on its independent status.*<sup>33</sup>

For centuries the priest-patron relationship has been a real institution in Tibetan history, linking secular rulers with Tibetan hierarchs.<sup>34</sup> However, the discussion essentially streamlines to one essential aspect, embracing the nature of Tibet's interrelation to Chinese imperialists as that of religious advisors, between emperors and Tibetan lamas, as opposed to the notion that China was a ruling authority over Tibet. The Dalai Lama on at least one occasion proposed to the Chinese government that the priest-patron relationship be the basis for resolving the Tibet issue.<sup>34</sup>

Precluding the incidences of the Chinese assertion over Tibet in 1950, Tibet had failed to make any comprehensive assertions disassociating themselves from the Chinese narrative of the historical status of Tibet; they were only successful in their endeavour of claiming their independence backed by conclusive evidentiary data at the Shimla conference. With Tibetan acquiescence to the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 1951, Tibet formally became part of the People's Republic of China and the question of its historical status essentially fell dormant.<sup>35</sup>

On establishing the Tibetan GiE during the course of the year 1959, the Dalai Lama found it quintessential to address the Tibetan issue in a public forum thereby writing to the United Nations on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1959, writing to the Secretary General the Dalai Lama annotated in this letter:

*I and my Government wish to emphasize that Tibet was a sovereign state at the time when her territorial integrity was violated by the Chinese Armies in 1950. In support of this contention the Government of Tibet urge the following: First, no power or authority was exercised by the Government of China in or over Tibet since the Declaration of Independence by the 13th Dalai Lama in 1912.*<sup>36</sup>

All other points made in the letter also relate to events of the twentieth century, such as Tibet's neutrality in World War II and the contention that the ability of Tibetan delegates to travel to various countries on Tibetan passports in the 1940s constituted recognition of Tibet's sovereign status. The lack of reference to any Tibetan documents is indicative of the fact that the Tibetan



government, in approaching the UN after 1959, sought out and worked with several non-Tibetan advisers and made much use of the work of the International Commission of Jurists, which published its first report on Tibet in 1959.

With the Chinese annexation of Tibet and the essential quashing of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, there was a complete suspension of communication between the Tibetan GiE and the government of China. The historical status of Tibet was dealt with by the Tibetan government as part of its international representation, more or less along the lines of argumentation already described. There was no real engagement with Chinese arguments for some decades; Tibetan pronouncements on the case for Tibetan independence reflected an emphasis on twentieth-century events.

## **6. The Establishment of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile**

The events of 1950 can be encapsulated as the Chinese incursion into Tibet, wherein the PLA of China entered Eastern Tibet via Chamdo; this marked the commencement of the 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet as acclaimed by the Chinese government. Following the events of 1950, the PLA essentially decimated the Tibetan national uprising in Lhasa in 1958 which then forced the Dalai Lama with his constituent Tibetan refugees to seek a home in the neighbouring regions. On 29 April 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama established the Tibetan exile administration in the north Indian hill station of Mussoorie. Named the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, this is the continuation of the government of independent Tibet. In May 1960, the CTA was moved to Dharamsala.<sup>37</sup> The Dalai Lama subsequently endeavoured to promote Tibet's independence and focused his efforts on the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees. After establishing the Tibetan GiE, the exiled Tibetan diaspora has worked towards organising their governmental structures. The Tibetan GiE is now recognised as one of the most institutionalised structure globally. A series of changes have reorganised TGiE according to democratic principles and, following reforms in 1991, the government has developed a participatory democracy for the first time in Tibet's history. Today, operating under the constitution-like 'Charter of Tibetans-in-Exile', TGiE consists of a legislative parliament, an executive body (Kashag), judiciary and seven governmental departments.<sup>38</sup> In the 1960s, Tsepon Wangchuck Deden Shakabpa published a number of contributions to the Tibetan view of Tibetan history<sup>39</sup> (Shakabpa, 2009). These represented the first use of Tibetan primary sources in modern discussions of Tibetan history and questions of sovereignty<sup>40</sup> (Klieger, 1991).

Today, the Tibetan diaspora numbers approximately 122,000, with 70% residing in India, after unsuccessful accommodation in transit camps and road-construction sites across the Indian Himalayas, the Government of India (GoI) established self-contained Tibetan settlements throughout India.<sup>41</sup>

## **7. The Legitimacy of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and Its Claim of Statehood**

The Tibetan GiE has maintained its existence in India, and its relevance to the diaspora of Tibetans, for more than seven decades. The Tibetan government has over the decades established the fundamental structures of its government in exile and has now incorporated an autonomous state structure to its government. The refurbished and evolved Tibetan government has taken on functionalities like democratic elections, the provision of health and education services for Tibetans in India and Nepal, a 'voluntary' taxation system, the issuing of Tibetan 'passports' and the establishment of quasi 'embassies'.<sup>42</sup> Tibet however, in spite of being globally known for one of the most established networking community is faced with the paucity of jurisdiction over any dominion, this negates their ability to exercise conventional authority over judicial, military and economic functions that a regular established government would exercise.

In focusing on the increasing democratization transformation of the Tibetan GiE, Ardley questioned whether this development is connected to the Tibetans' struggle for independence and legitimacy or ensuring transition after the retirement or death of the 14th Dalai Lama. At the same time, it is important to point out that the democracy of Tibetan GIL differs radically from conventional notions of Western notions, as the typical features, such as competitive electoral leadership, party ideology, an opposition, and internal conflict and debate, are absent<sup>43</sup> (Ardley, 2003).

Tibet's allegations of impaired sovereignty and the a typical development of Tibetan GiE as a democratic institution have made the GIL of great interest to political scholars' sovereignty, as it allows for the deconstruction of norms in political models and thinking. According to McConnell, GiEs are geopolitical exceptions: their very existence raises questions within political science about "sovereignty and territory, the nature of statehood and the role of 'the exception' in geopolitical discourses".<sup>44</sup>(McConnell 2013bp. 1902). Within the context of the Tibet-China conflict over Tibetan sovereignty, McConnell positioned the conflict as the power dynamic over legitimacy, whereby the battles were fought through state identity labels. For example, the ethnic Tibetan-in-exile is considered a citizen by the Tibetan GiE, and either a refugee or guest by the state where they reside (McConnell, 2013a).<sup>45</sup> It is the ambiguity of the identity of the state that institutionalizes ambivalent formal identities of status vis-à-vis the state(McConnell, 2013a). In other words, it reveals the power of the Tibetan GiEinrelation to China in that the existence of the dual categories creates uncertainty regarding the Chinese claim of authority over Tibet.

## **8. Discussion**

Western ambivalence toward Tibet and the Dalai Lama is reflected in the fact that the Tibetan GiE remains unrecognized officially at the state level, even as the Dalai Lama has been embraced as a popular cultural icon, and by extension, the Tibetan cause, around the world.

### **8.1 Realist and Neorealist Interpretations**

The disenfranchisement of a people from their territory is a strategy that has been often repeated over the course of the 20th century, the peak of realism and neorealism. The traditional realist paradigm is built on the assumption that violent conflict, typically taking the form of war or the threat of war, is based on resources of value. However, the separation of a population from its territory and resources, after such a war, is not well discussed within this school of thought. It could be argued that it achieved the same goals and aims as more traditional realist threats; this raises the question of the workings and implications of a paved way to establish governments outside their originating territories and how this might influence the workings of well-established state governments already prevalent.

A more nuanced neorealist approach is focused on looking at the source of the conflict within the system of disorder. To that end, it is the acceptance of the displacement of sovereignty that is the international community's displacement of the population, which would be identified as the real problem<sup>46</sup> (McConnell, 2012, 2016). Essentially, more developed nations consider the development of legitimacy and international awareness to pose a serious threat as a strong leader, good governance, and a self-declaring population are as potent as a weapon of destruction. Control over the process and method of leader selection of the "unrecognized" Tibetan GiE and Dalai Lama has, therefore, become the strategic control point over which the battle is being fought.

### **8.2 Liberal and Neoliberal Interpretations**

A liberal interpretation of the conflict has emphasized the principles and practices of freedom and democracy that are currently being denied to Tibetans both within and outside of Tibet, with a positive regard for the on-going incorporation of modern democracy that has resulted in the evolution of the Tibetan GiE. Certainly, this alignment of Tibetan governance with liberal principles helps to position Tibetans in the West on moral high ground, which poses a threat to Chinese interests. However, the Tibetan advantage is also neutralized by the realities that are captured by the neoliberal perspective that is centred upon the motivation of the elite supporters of free market principles. There is no question that there is a relationship between the Tibetan conflict and international economics: this is apparent in the Dalai Lama effect. It refers to China's use of economic levers to punish the nations that receive the Tibetan leader or recognize Tibetan sovereignty<sup>47</sup> (Sverdrup-Thygeson, 2015). There is further the aspect of the

disenfranchisement of the Tibetans from their resources in their territory, with great implications for the development of wealth and Tibetan society, and potential contingent liability for China, should international courts have a similar outlook.

## **9. Conclusion**

The Tibetan conflict with China needs to signify the necessity to clarify the stance taken by both the Tibetan government-in-exile as well as the Chinese government. History is the primary identifier being witness to either party's stance on the historical state of Tibet; this is notwithstanding the fact that there exists a variance in the interpretation of historical data in both Chinese literary formats as well as those of Tibetan literature. While the Chinese rely significantly on Chinese language based historical documentation, Tibet on the other hand relies significantly lesser on Tibetan language annals and more predominantly on English language based transcriptions of historical evidence. This creates a void in itself on the factual understanding and breaking down of historical evidence to determine the legitimacy of either stance taken by either China or Tibet. However, the issue at hand of simply examining historical facts will not be the end all solution to the Tibetan crisis, the analysis of history is primarily necessary to understand the basics of what occurred historically to mend a pathway towards a resolution of the existing conflict. The Dalai Lama's refusal to accede to China's claim of Tibet historically being an intrinsic part of ancient China is the major stand off point between the Chinese and Tibetans. China's interest in asserting their authority over the next incarnation of the Dali Lama is significant as well as it is a direct impetus meant to exert China's narrative over its authority over Tibet. In spite of the differing understandings of the historical annals, it can be stated that the incorporation of Tibet into China was established after the events of 1949, when the People's Republic of China established their incursion into the dominion presided over by the Dalai Lama. However with the notion that political agendas in the Asian region are ever evolving which almost always leads to conflicting stances, it becomes all the more imperative to analyse and understand history as a means to diffuse any further discrepancies that may arise.

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