Moving Beyond Identity:

The Tibet Question Revisited

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Contents

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Abstract

This research paper explores the discursive construction of China and Tibet's national identity, and how it interrelates with China-Tibet relations. In contrast to studies suggesting a defining and determinant role of national identity on China-Tibet relations, this research paper argues that the collective identity of Tibet and China is a hegemonic and highly contested construction, and Tibet and China, therefore, should look beyond identity and search for an alternative approach to nation/state building without succumbing to either Chinese nationalism or Tibetan nationalism. Drawing on the work of some of the critical theorists, this research paper shows that it is bound to fail to build a political community based on a collective national identity. This research paper proposes that the authorities of Tibet and China should negotiate for future institutional reform of the Tibet Question by the recognition of the contingent identities of the multitude.

Keywords:

China, Tibet, National Identity, Constructivism, Critical theory, Feminism, Institution

Introduction

Introduction

Since the 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet in 1951 by the new communist government of China that led to the first Lhasa uprising and the escape of the Dalai Lama in 1959, with two major riots followed in 1989 and 2008, the debate on Tibetan nationhood has been continuing. The trouble of the Tibet Question (Goldstein 1995: 2) is above all self-evident in the disputed name. There are three ways to understand what 'Tibet' is. First, the Chinese Tibet, or political Tibet, is roughly corresponding to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Second, the Ethnographic Tibet, or cultural Tibet, is the so-called Greater Tibet, which includes all areas where 'Tibetans' live, including the TAR, parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces[1]. Third, the Tibet in Exile is a vague term, which covers all areas where the Tibetans in exile live, mainly in India, Nepal, and Bhutan[2].

The contemporary debate of the Tibet Question[3] traces back to the Dalai Lama's flight to India after the riot in 1959 and the establishment of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE). Since then the Dalia Lama and the TGIE have been the key driver for the Tibetan nationalist movement, and interestingly this authority of Tibet is not in 'Tibet' any more. The Dalai Lama since has become the prominent representative of the Tibetan people and a globally respected icon of peace, as claimed by the TGIE. The PRC, however, consistently condemns that the Tibetan independence issues are created by both the 'Dalai clique' and Western imperialism, insisting the PRC's sovereignty over Tibet. The Dalai Lama is viewed by Beijing as enemy

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[1] Things will get even more complicated if one starts to question who the 'Tibetans' are in this occasion, as commons sense that Tibetans are people who live in Tibet does not work. The use of Tibet in this paper refers to the Ethnographic Tibet in general, unless specified otherwise.
[2] The latest figure in 2010 from the PRC shows the population of Tibetans in TAR is about 2.7 million according to xinhuanet.com (04/05/2011. access on 08/01/2012). The Chinese census in 2000 shows there are about 6 million Tibetans living in the Ethnographic Tibet; The TGIE's figures show that more than 145,000 Tibetans live in exile (Fisher 2011).
[3] The Tibet Question is certainly multi-dimensional, including the issues of sovereignty, ethnicity, cultural autonomy, development, and human rights, to name just a few. This paper, however, focuses on the national identity dispute in China-Tibet relations.

number one, described as a 'wolf in monk's robes' and 'a monster with human face', and his image is banned in the TAR[4].

The Tibet Question occupies a significant position in the politics of China, Central Asia, and between China and the world. The debate on the Tibetan Question spans across the issues of economy, culture, religion, identity, environment, and human rights, in political science and international relations (IR). The debate has attracted so much attention from state governments through to the politicians, international support groups, human rights organizations, environmental specialists, and academics, that it has always been an international issue.

The debate of the Tibetan Question is constantly caught in dichotomies: either patriots or reactionaries for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); patriots or traitors for Tibetans; pro-China or pro-Tibet; the focus of recognition or redistribution; the developmental problems caused by the Western model or the Chinese model; and either the romantics or the realists. Each oppositional perspective has expended an enormous amount of time and effort and strives to represent the universal claims of history and truth, the result being diametrically opposed constructions of reality' (Goldstein 2004, quoted in Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 4). There have been so many diverse and often contradictory perspectives commented about Tibet that perhaps no other place on earth can be much more so.

For the Chinese CCP, Tibet is undisputedly a part of China. President *Hu Jintao* declares, 'the peaceful liberation of Tibet was a major event in modern Chinese history and an epoch-making turning point in the course of development in Tibet'. [5] State propaganda CCTV announced that Lhasa was awarded the '2010 City With the Happiest People'[6]. For Tibetans, at least the representative TGIE, Tibet is a distinctively separate civilization from the Chinese one. The PRC claims Tibetans are among 56 ethnic nationalities bound closer together by a

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[4] '17 Points of Disagreement: 60 years of China's failed policies in Tibet',
http://www.tibetnetwork.org/17pointsofdisagreements (access on 09/02/2012).
[5] Hu Jintao, Lhasa, 19 July 2001. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-10/16/content_10205324.htm (access on 02/02/2012)
[6] '17 Points of Disagreement: 60 years of China's failed policies in Tibet',
http://www.tibetnetwork.org/17pointsofdisagreements (access on 09/02/2012).

common destiny. From Tibetan's point of view, however, this fabrication is rooted in China's colonization of Tibet and other neighboring territories. Tibet is not only a clearly defined nation, but the government of Tibet fulfilled the criteria of a sovereign state three decades before the founding of the PRC[7].

For the West, their foreign policies are constantly contradictory. On the one hand, both the US and the European Union countries condemn China's policy over Tibet. After the Tibetan uprising in 2008, John McCain, as a Republican presidential candidate, said that Tibet was one of the first things he would address as president.[8] Obama wrote to Bush that the situation in Tibet was deeply disturbing, and urged Bush to speak out forcefully and publicly.[9] On the other hand, the support for Tibet from the West is clearly trumped by other priorities, such as national interests, mainly economic and trade, and their more urgent strategic focus, such as the Middle East and the War on Terror. The result is that the diplomatic action and foreign policy from the West is substantively limited to cultural and identity recognition, human rights, and political autonomy.

Amongst all of the above opposing perspectives, the dispute of national identity has become prominent, and has fueled the Tibetan nationalist movement. This search for a Tibetan nationhood has represented a central element of Tibetan-Chinese relations for decades, and proven to be an enduring international issue today and into the future (Bertrand & Laliberte 2010: 221). This research paper explores the discursive construction of Tibet and China's national identity, and how the identity discourse, amongst other factors such as economy and institution, has affected China-Tibet relations. Particularly, this paper highlights how the political subjects of China and Tibet have been constructed in contested manners over time. Under the rubric of identity / culture, the so-called Tibetan Question is often framed and consequently dealt with by state policies in dramatically opposing ways. The primary question of this research paper is therefore – Is there an alternative approach to either a Tibetan Tibet or a Chinese Tibet for the resolution of the Tibet Question?

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[7] See the official website of the TGIE: http://tibet.net/about-tibet/tibet-at-a-glance/ (access on 05/02/2012).
[8] 'McCain says China's conduct in Tibet unacceptable', *Reuters*, 21 March 2008 (access on 05/02/2012).
[9] See Barack Obama's letter to President Bush, 28 March 2008 (access on 02/02/2012).

This research paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter briefly looks at how the Tibet Question is discussed in scholarly literature. This chapter contends that identity politics remains a critical platform, among many others, to examine the complexity of the politics in Tibet, and paradoxically a threshold to the ultimate solution of the Tibet Question. The second chapter discusses how identity politics is theorized divergently by political thinkers. Drawing on the work from some of the critical theorists (poststructualist, postcolonialist, and feminist), this chapter points to the problematic notion of a collective identity and argues that it is power and discourse that make identity *seem* natural. The third chapter examines the historical and social construction of national identity in the PRC and Tibet, and more importantly elicits the fragmented, contested, unsustainable nature of a collective identity. The last chapter explores possible institutional reform of the Tibet Question. It argues that the future community building in Tibet is dependent on institutional reform that is based on the recognition of the contingent identities of the multitude.

Chapter 1. Contextualizing the Tibet Question

This first chapter sets out the discussion of the Tibet Question by a brief review of the literature in this field and a summary of the major debates amongst the Tibet Question scholars.

1.1 Literature review

There is a constellation of English literature on the subject of the Tibet Question. A quick Google-search will return with thousands of book-length text, amongst them about 18-strong monographic books dedicated to this particular subject since the recent uprising in 2008. Amongst the literature, the divergence in views is enormous. Part of the reason is because of the difficulty of mastering the facts in Tibet. The dearth of independent research data makes it even worse. Virtually all publications on development in Tibet are based on often-dubious official Chinese government statistics (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 193). The primary reason, the paper maintains, is the divided and contentious political ideologies and the opposing ways of framing the problems that lead to the polarization of the views.

The West has been fascinated by Tibet for centuries. The Tibet Question, in English literature, is mostly commented from the traditional perspectives of Westphalian International Relations[10], in an uncritical and unproblematical way based on the European historical paradigms. Classic realists assert that politics is governed by laws that are created by biological human nature, and that International Relations are best understood through the concept of *interests* defined in terms of power (Morgenthau 1955: 30). Neo-realists continue

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[10] The Peace Treaties of Westphalia and Osnabruck (1648) established the legal basis of modern statehood and by implication the fundamental rules of modern world politics, including: territoriality, sovereignty and autonomy. See more detail in: Baylis et al. 2009. *The Globalization of World Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

to defend the core concept of interest and power, supplemented by looking at how domestic politics influences the distribution of power and foreign policy behavior (Waltz 2002: 211).

When it comes to the Tibet Question, not many to date, still see it from a pure orthodox realist perspective. Hoffmann, for example, sought to explain the Tibetan question from the perspective of a classic security dilemma conceived by the competing powers. He argues that in security dilemma states are driven to accumulate ever more power, yet they remain insecure because of the competition with their neighbors and rivals (Hoffmann 2006: 193). Others comment on the Tibet issue with aspects of the realist view. For example, they include China's concerns of the material and economic potentials of Tibet into their arguments. There is certainly validity in realism, which tends to do well explaining the continuity of the international structure and power patterns. However, the limitations of realism have been well explored, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union[11].

Liberals, as usual, uphold the mottos of political freedom, economic development and cultural autonomy. A liberal's view on Tibet is generally two fold. Firstly, for many liberals Tibet is romanticized as an innocent and divine place detached from other political powers. For example, Smith poses that Tibet is known as the 'roof of the World', with its image of 'Shangri-la' based on the unique Tibetan culture and religion (Smith, W 2008: x). Secondly, liberals easily draw a clear line between the Chinese authoritarian regime and the oppressed Tibet. Thus the resolution of the Tibet Question has to be one ideology's victory over the other one. Can liberalism solve the Tibet Question? Fukuyama hails about the victory of neoliberalism. He argued in 1992 that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism. More than that, however, he argued that liberal democracy may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government,' and as such constituted the 'end of history.' (Fukuyama 1992). History, however, clearly diverges from Fukuyama's assertion, and reality unequivocally shows the

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[11] The main criticism for contemporary realism is from social constructivism (Wendt 1999), and a group of alternative, or anti-foundational, theories, such as post-modernism, feminism, historical sociology, and post-colonialism (Baylis et al. 2010).

problems of promoting liberalism around the globe, for example the democratization in the East Europe after the Cold War, and the recent Iraq wars.

Constructivists have also made a strong case that culture and identity matter. In a nutshell, constructivists maintain that ideas and preferences decide the behaviour patterns of the actors[12]. Prominent scholar Huntington highlights the critical role of culture in world politics. He writes, 'The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future'. (Huntington 1993: 22) In response to the rise of China, for example, Kang asserts that China's aggressive approach to Taiwan should not be looked at as power expansionist behaviour, nor be conceived as a realist notion of tipping the balance of power in the region. Rather, the Taiwan problem is China's disagreement on Taiwan's proclaimed independent identity, and it is an integral part of China's unfinished nationalistic project (Kang 2007: 5). Obviously for constructivists, the 'ideas matter' thesis is equally compelling in the case of Tibet. In fact, constructivism has become the conventional wisdom to explain the Tibet problem through the framing of national identity conflicts. For instance, Wolff maintains that the twentieth century proved that ethnicity is a more enduring human characteristic than class (Wolff 2010: i). Topgyal insists that Tibetan identity insecurity should be the underlying cause of the uprising in 2008, and of the Tibetan question in general (Topgyal 2011: 186). To what extent do ideas and identity matter? Can ideas and identity solve the Tibet Question? This becomes the first point of departure of this research paper to explore the validity and critique the constructivist's view of identity.

Apart from these mainstream political traditions, a set of different political thinkers, generally coined as critical theorists, for instance, postmodernist, post-structuralist, post-colonialist, and feminist, have distinctive views in world politics[13]. Despite its internal variations, the success

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[12] For example, Wendt argues that 'The deep structure of anarchy is cultural or ideational rather than material…there are three roles, enemy, rival, and friend,…that are constituted by, and constitute, three distinct macro-level cultures of international politics, Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian, respectively.' (Wendt 1999: 279-299).

[13] There are different categorizations for these alternative theories. For example, Devetak differentiates critical theory from post-structuralist theory. Some, by contrast, put all of the theories under the rubric 'critical theory', representing a range of approaches including Marxism and post-Marxism, the Frankfurt School, hermeneutics, phenomenology, post-colonialism,

of critical international theory rests, as Devetak puts it, on its ability to offer a more self-reflective theory than traditional modes of international theory by the ethos of critique and the spirit of universal emancipation. Based on these two normative interests, critical international theory not only is concerned with providing explanations of the existing realities of world politics (as traditional IR theories have been doing), but also intends to criticize them in order to transform them (Devetak 1995: 36). Critical theory has gained its prominence in IR. Although a few critical theorists have commented on the Tibet Question, the Tibet Question debate, this paper argues, is long overdue to engage critical international theories. This engagement with critical international theory becomes another point of departure for this paper.

Besides English literature, Chinese literature is also emerging in the debate of the Tibet Question. The overall picture of Chinese literature on the Tibet Question in response to the 2008 uprising remains unclear. Most of the Chinese language scholarship stands by the side of the CCP against Tibet's independence and the so-called Western Imperialism, even though they often disagree with many other aspects of the CCP's rule. As one of the best Tibet experts with Han heritage, Wang Li-xiong blatantly points out the intertwined nature of China-Tibet relations. The exemplar case in point is the local Tibetans' involvement in the destruction of temples and the denial of their religion during the Cultural Revolution (Wang, L 2002: 79). The prominent figure of the Chinese 'New Left' academics, Wang Hui, defends the institutional design of Chinese's multi-ethnic state policy[14]. He argues that the Tibet Question should be understood in three major contexts: the influence of Orientalism, the discourses manipulated by some political powers and international organizations, and the West's mixture feelings of anxiety, fear, exclusion, and disapproval towards the rise of non-liberal China. The voices from these Chinese commentators, no matter how biased they are (probably as much as all of the other dominant West commentators), must not be dismissed.

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feminism, queer theory, post-structuralism, pragmatism, scientific realism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis (Edkins & Vaughan-Williams eds 2009).
[14] See Wang, Hui. 2008. "Beyond Orientalism and Nationalism" an interview on Utopia. http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class17/200806/40777.html (access on 2/11/2011)

1.2 The debates

To summarize the field, there are a number of debates discernable in the current literature on the Tibet Question. First, the critical question posed for Tibet scholars is how to discuss the Tibetan Question without falling into either the West romanticism or Chinese Han ethnocentricism, either Tibetan nationalism or Chinese nationalism. Most of the pro-Tibet Western commentators still dwell on the dichotomy of a sacred Tibet with 'its unique culture with an aura of romantic mystery and spiritual enlightenment' (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 130) and an evil Han Chinese regime. Following this dichotomy, for example, Hoa and Turner's prospect of the future of China-Tibet relations is the emergence of the Chinese tributary state with *de facto* control over Tibet by demographic expansion and occupation by stealth (Hoa and Turner 2010: 252). Pro-China commentators, by contrast, take a directly oppositional standpoint. Xu and Yuan contend that the Tibet Question has roots in British imperial expansion in South Asia, and what currently the West, led by the US, has done on the issue of the Tibet Question is 'an insult to the Chinese people, especially to the Han Chinese' (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 316). The primary task for Tibet scholars, therefore, is to avoid being trapped into any of the current established political discourse represented by national interest. This paper suggests the engagement of critical international theory can eventually retrieve the multi-faceted nature of the Tibet Question by persistent critique, and point to the possible future of peaceful solution by a critical forward looking approach.

Secondly, it is equally important to question what exactly accounts for the development problems and rights violation issues in Tibet. One side of the debate maintains that the CCP's autocratic rule is the source of problems, as the development in Tibet and the western region (*xibu da kaifa*) benefits the Hans far more than Tibetans. Andrew Fisher, for example, argues that Tibetans are impoverished while their environment is irreparably damaged under the Chinese state development model (Fisher 2002). Others assert that capitalist globalization holds partial responsibility for the social and economic changes of Tibetan society. However there are nuanced views in terms of the exact way globalization impacts Tibet. For Dawa

Norbu, globalization is taken advantage of by Chinese nationalists to realize the long term sacred mission of killing the very idea of Tibetan identity once and for all through Sinicization and Stalinist industrial gigantism without the PLA firing a single shot (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 163).

For Hu and Salazar, by contrast, the ethnic conflict in Tibet is closely linked to the cross-regional and cross-ethnic migration driven by the urbanization and industrialization in China, through the swift penetration of the market to ethnic minority regions (Hu & Salazar: 2008: 1-21). They argue that social conflict in Tibet is comparable to what happens in China's booming industrial coastal regions, where the social tensions come primarily from the urban/rural development disparity. The PRC alone is not the only source of problems for Tibet. The Tibet Question must be read in the context of globalization. To locate Tibet's position of its development and future, we should look at Tibet and China in the context of globalization. The Tibet Question is not merely between Tibet and China, but is more and more interdependent on and interrelating to the rest of the world, economic and politically.

The third important question is how to resolve the identity conundrum of Tibet. The Tibet Question is often framed in the language of the 'clash of civilization'. Clearly culture and identity are at the forefront of the debate. Liberal constructivism maintains that national identity is socially and historically constructed. Liberals' affirmative recognition, multiculturalism, as Will Kymlicka argues, is able to defend political policies aimed at ensuring the 'survival' or 'autonomy' of minority cultures (Kymlicka 1996: 4). However, liberals assume that it is still possible to sharply demarcate 'distinctive societies' or 'societal cultures' from one another. It is argued that one can uncontroversially distinguish the practices and beliefs that are intrinsic to a culture from those that are inauthentic or extrinsic (Fraser & Honneth 2003: 104). A large amount of the literature on Tibet politics falls into these liberal constructivist paradigms.

Critical theorists, however, tend to be skeptical about the simplistic notion of identity politics. Feminists contend that usually misrecognition is interpreted as depreciated identity, and the politics of recognition means identity politics, aimed at affirming a given group identity, but

that interpretation is problematic, as it reifies identities, encourages separatism, and masks intra-group domination (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Moreover, critical theorists tend to contemplate more on the need for normative thinking, i.e. how to build a fair community and achieve political emancipation.

There are so many differing ways to look at the Tibet Question. While it is impossible to address every single aspect of the Tibet Question, this research paper nonetheless focuses on how identity politics plays out in China-Tibet relations. As Sautman and Dreyer put it the conflict over Tibet has above all been about its political status (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 3). However, to look at the Tibet Question through the lens of identity is by no means to overlook other critical factors, such as material, economic, institutional, and international actors. Rather, this paper attempts to include most of those critical factors within the discussion of the identity discourse. Through the platform of the salient identity discourse, this research paper paradoxically seeks to move beyond the identity politics, and argue that the future community building for both Tibet and China should be based on the recognition of the open and contingent identities of the multitude by demolishing the clear cut national identity.

Chapter 2. Theorizing the identity debate

"There is an expectation of a meaning, a substance, that is at once produced and thwarted by the formal act of positing. The identity that the name confers turns out to be empty, and this insight into its emptiness produced a critical position on the naturalizing effects of this naming process." (Butler 2000: 28)

This chapter explores how national identity is theorized divergently by political thinkers, particularly highlighting the debate between essentialism and constructivism. Drawing on the work from some of the critical theorists, this chapter points to the problematic notion of a collective identity, and argues that it is social power and discourse that make national identity *seem* like this.

2.1 Identity debate: Essentialism and Constructivism

The public discourse of nation is often compelling: 'Chinese nation with 5000-year history of splendid *hua* culture'; 'The whole of Tibet known as Cholka-Sum (U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity'.[15] Nationalism is not just a delusion in people's everyday life intensified by mass media. Nationalism, for many, becomes values that are worth defending, even dying for. At some point, 77 percent of Americans in one survey say they would be willing to fight in a war for their country (Mathews 2000: 7). Most Mainland Chinese would agree to achieve national unity through a military option (Chow 2008: 11-12).

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[15] Speech by the Dalai Lama: http://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/statement-of-his-holiness (access on 01/02/2012).

Nation and national identity as political concepts are notoriously difficult to define and analyse. Is nation real? Are there any inherently static elements that the individual can refer to at a personal level? The answers to these questions are the key to the resolution of the Tibet Question. There are four mainstream social theories that approach national identity formation from different perspectives, namely essentialism, instrumentalism, constructivism, and institutionalism. It is generally believed that pure essentialism does not exist any more, and constructivism is the conventional wisdom on national identity formation (Varshney 2009: 285). After decades of scholarly debate, it is now almost a consensus to say nation and national identity are socially constructed, rather than natural and pre-given. But what does it mean to say they are 'socially constructed'?

Both Anderson and Smith highlight culture as the root of a nation. For Anderson, nations are '*imagined communities*', and are constructed through the development of printing press and capitalism, and the spread of vernacular language necessitated by the state. However, he concedes that nation or nationalism has to be understood by aligning it with 'cultural roots', or 'the large cultural systems that precede it' (Anderson 2006: 12). For Smith, modern nations are reconstructed on the basis of pre-modern ethnic communities - *ethnie*. He argues that no matter how revolutionary industrial capitalism and modernity has been working on nation's formation, the origins of nations, in his words, 'many of the *cultures* and *identities* formed in pre-modern eras' and their 'internal properties', remain traceable and important to every nation-ness today (Smith 1986: 3). In a similar vein, Laitin sees that nation is a product of cultural coordination and the claim to statehood or political autonomy for the population that successfully coordinates (Laintin 2007: 41). Guibernau defines national identity as a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations (Guibernau 2007: 11).

For many social constructivists nation and national identity are socially constructed rather than natural and pre-given. And yet, when they try to trace back further historically and probe down deeper analytically, there is still always something at the core, either culture or internal properties, that is stubbornly sticky and is impossible to obliterate under the name of national identity. Despite the differences of their focuses and variants of their arguments, recent

mainstream constructivist literature more or less agrees on the 'Janus-facedness' of national identity – the two components of national identity: one is real, given; and the other is constructed, or negotiated (Laitin 1998: 20). Laitin argues that one face of national identity is based on cultural foundations such as shared symbols that provide people of a cultural group a common world view and a shared vision of what is worth fighting for. The other face is based on people's strategic coordination that makes culture *seem* stable, yet open to rapid shifts in cultural identification (Laitin 2007: viii). Framing in this way, national identity, in Laitin's words, is sailing between the Scylla of primordialists and the Charybdis of instrumentalists.

Of the two faces, the strategic face of national identity is used to address the difference or the otherness, and is closely bound up to individual's strategic choice as an autonomous agent. This issue on individual identity choice is beyond the scope of this paper[16]. The cultural face of national identity, in contrast, is identical to Anderson and Smith's 'cultural root' argument, and is tied to the 'cultural foundation'. Is this foundation pre-given and constructed? The answer to this would probably distinguish a good constructivist from a primordialist. But how can constructivists escape foundationalism (Smith 1995: 29)[17] if they premise their argument on this cultural foundation? This is perhaps one of the paradoxes that constructivists are yet to resolve.

The discussion of cultural foundation leads to the two sides of identification: sameness and difference. Jenkins insists that the importance of identity hinges on the interplay of similarity and difference (Jenkins 2008: 16-27). On the one hand, the recognition of 'us' is also dependent upon with whom we have things 'in common'. He uses the word 'similarity', things 'in common', not sameness, to sail away from essentialism. On the other hand, the recognition of 'us' is dependent upon our not being 'them', or to say 'who I am' is to say 'who or what I am not'. Few would question the 'difference' side of identity. Therefore, it is clear now that the debate of a national identity is always caught up in the difficult issue of how much sameness we share, under the name of 'our' identity.

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[16] For more detailed discussion about the individual identity choice and agency, see Laitin (2007), Butler (1997, 2005).

[17] See Smith (1995) review of international relations theories. He highlights the debate between foundationalist and anti-foundationalist. Foundationalism, for Smith, is the ways in which a theory serves as a neutral arbiter, representing the truth.

2.2 Beyond identity: a critical approach

To tackle this difficulty of the sameness, critical theory, especially feminist's identity theory, may cast new light on the myth of nation and the sameness of national identity. Feminist's theory, particularly Butler's work for this paper, has been influential in critiques of gender identity, politics of state violence, and mourning, but it has not yet been used adequately to look at national identity critically. There are two fundamental principles from Butler's work that differentiate her politics from mainstream constructivist: for one, there is no intrinsic foundation for any collective identity; for another, the salience of identity is the result of the operation of social power and discourse, which makes collective identity *seem* natural.

In her scholarly founding text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler challenges the pervasive notion in social science that sex is biologically pre-existing, whilst gender is socially constructed. She argues that sex is already the bodily effect of gender, where the body materialises through regulatory gendered regimes of power/knowledge, or in her words, the heteronormativity (Butler 1990: 7, 35). Butler fundamentally challenges this nature and culture relation and ultimately the very concept of identity. Moreover, Butler argues that 'woman' is not a singular and sustainable identity. Feminism becomes an identity politics if it assumes 'woman' as a singular category. Reflecting on the troubled disputes between different strands of feminists, such as European feminist, African-American feminist, and lesbian feminist, Butler asks 'how is it that the very category, the subject, the we, that is supposed to be presumed for the purpose of solidarity, produces the very factionalization it is supposed to quell?' (Butler 1992: 14).

There is a fundamental problem of *exclusiveness* inherently in the name of identity. The notion of identity is able to furnish the focal point for collective action, as the feminist slogan 'sisterhood is powerful' suggests. However, an identity assumes a collective subject that represents what 'we' are, and inevitably sets firm boundaries against the others. Butler asserts that identity functions so as to exclude those who fail to fit with its 'descriptivist ideal' (Butler 1993: 221). The Israeli state cannot gain its legitimacy without an identity of Jewishness based on some shared characteristics and a shared history of perceived oppression. Mainland China's firm policy on the Tibet Question is premised on an ethnic nationalist sense of

Chineseness. The central problem of national identity, as Iris Young points out, is that the 'merely different' is turned into the 'absolute other' (Llord 2005: 38).

Beside the problem of exclusiveness, an identity can never equate sameness. It has become a well-received view that women are no longer a unitary and homogenous group. There is vast diversity in 'women', rather than a singular 'woman'. Women do not share any essential connection with one another through the fact of simply being female. In a broader perspective, identity politics, apprehended as the proclamation of some form of homogeneity among gender, race, nationality, is not simply an attempt to describe certain crucial characteristics or an authentic subjective experience, it is inherently prescriptive and normalizing. Following Butler's logics of the denaturalization and destabilization of identity, this paper argues that what we think of nation makes the nation. This is the key component that functions to make the nation *seem* like it is. Precisely because there are too many origins of nation, there is no origin for nation, be it *ethnie* or culture. What we think, or what discourse makes us think, is *the* origin of nation.

Echoing Butler, Brubaker casts doubt on identity. He insists that ethnic groups, as he believes they are generally conceptualised within social science as clearly bounded, internally fairly homogenous and distinguished from other groups of the same kind, are not real. What is real is a shared sense of 'groupness', of group membership. Brubaker goes on and argues that identity in general is not a thing that people can be said to have, or that they can be; thus it is not real either. (Brubaker 2004: 7-27, quoted in Jenkins 2008: 8). There is an underlying assumption that nation is built on real things, such as national territory, languages, population, race, ethnicity; while nationalism is an ideology, such as ideas, norms. Following Brubaker's logic, this paper argues that nation is not real, only the ideologies of nationalism are real. It is the public discourse of grouping that rounds-up and invents the boundaries, and consequently the groups themselves.

China is often normalized as a historically old and culturally rich nation in the Communist regime. Yujiro's study shows that the history of China as a continuum beyond different dynasties and ethnic groups is never sustainable. He argues that 'China' as the name of the

country is only a recent invention in the late nineteenth century (Yujiro 2001: 357-369). It was born for the necessity of forging a uniform national identity and national culture to form a new state to succeed the Qing dynasty in front of modern foreign powers. It was at that moment that race/ethnicity was nationalised. Even the majority ethnicity of Han was not a genuine or pure race since new blood had been added to it since ancient times. Nor is there anything inherently static in the Tibetan identity. Tibet and Tibetan identity has been historically invented by The West, China, and Tibetans themselves, in exile or in diaspora. The next chapter will examine these processes of historical invention in detail.

The 'Janus-facedness' of national identity is premised on a cultural foundation while keeping its distance from primordialism. Here, whether it is constructed or not, has become irrelevant. The means they use of pointing to the cultural foundations, the sameness, for critical theorists, is already primordialist. The prominent scholar, Huntington, calling for the preservation of the American national identity in the wake of 9/11, is a good example (Huntington 2004). Although it is believed that pure essentialism is dead, it is arguable that the essential or foundational 'face' of nation is still haunting social constructivists. Therefore, to argue against essentialism today is not entirely a 'straw man' or beating the dead horse.

Moreover, one cannot deny that many constructivists' argument is based on a paradigm that is precisely built on the dichotomies of nature/culture, biological/social, ethnie/nation, object/subject. The difficulty for social construction is that this real, given 'national foundation' thing, be it culture, *ethnie*, or race, is as hard to define as nation itself. For instance, not many constructivists would dispute that a British person is intrinsically different from a black African or a Chinese person because of their distinct 'internal properties', even though they believe each nationality is socially constructed. Lloyd blatantly points out that the opposition between essentialism and constructivism is itself unsustainable, and that constructivism is simply a more sophisticated form of essentialism' (Lloyd 2005: 57). Despite its problematic treatment of constructivists as a homogeneous group, Lloyd's claim has its validity. It sums up in a simplified way how critical theorists disagree with some of the constructivists.

To sum up, whether there is origin or foundation for national identity is an important point for the discussion of Tibetan nationhood. This question directly ties to the query of whether national identity is negotiated, adopted, or simply rediscovered by the people. If there is no intrinsic sameness at all in national identity, then perhaps it does not seem right to 'rediscover' one's national roots in oneself for the sake of freedom and autonomy as a sovereign subject. If, following Butler, national identity is an ontologically empty thing, what is the force that draws individuals towards this empty identity?

2.3 How does collective identity come to seem like this

If there is no origin and sameness that we can point to in our national identity, why does it seem so natural that everyone has a nationality, or should eventually have one if not yet? Why do people believe in nation-ness, from Westerners securely feel their 'belonging' to liberal First-world national identities, to subaltern post-colonial Third-world people's fervent 'rediscovery' of their lost national roots? Butler, following Foucault, turns to the theories of discourse and power[18] to explain collective identity formation.

Social constructivists, most of them, already see power relations in national identity formation. For instance, discourses of national identity are discourses of power (Hogan 2009: 11). Constructivists have argued how languages and symbols, as the basic forms of discourse, play an important role in identity formation. In Anderson's 'imagined communities', the role of language, as a vehicle of discourse, plays a central role. The origins of nations are said to lie with the emergence of 'popular vernacular nationalism' at the point where printed languages replace visual images and symbols as the main means of holding large populations together (Anderson 1983: 29). Laitin pays attention to two crucial roles of language: first, the 'mother tongue' as national membership, second, the 'general will'[19] aspect of language (Laitin 2007: 31).

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[18] Discourse and power are conceived in highly theoretical and abstract manner in Foucault and Butler's work. This paper, however, discusses discourse and power mostly in a general social and historical sense.

[19] See Laitin 2007: 31, he argues, when Russian speaking is the general will or national culture, non-Russian speakers would gain if they switched to learn Russian. In fact, it is to everyone's benefit to coordinate.

Billig, however, contends that language does not create nationalism, so much as nationalism creates language. While nations may be imagined communities, the patterning of the imaginings cannot be explained in terms of differences of language, for languages themselves may have to be imagined as distinct entities (Billig 1995: 30, 36). Cohen insists symbols of community are constructed, and their significance is far from self-evident, or immutable. It is not the mere word 'nation' which triggers a response among people, but the accumulated wealth of meanings and associations it has come to represent (Day and Thompson 2004: 97).

Interestingly, the notion of 'imagined communities' by constructivists is quite close to Butler's 'psychic life of power' (Butler 1997)[20] in two ways. For one, national identity is socially constructed, by and large, in the form of discursive discourse. For another, national identity is imagined cognitively at the individual level. Butler's work on power and discourse is derived from Foucault's genealogical approach to social phenomenon. On the one hand, genealogy is predicated on a rejection of linear theories of historical development. What is discourse? For Foucault, *discourse* is constructed through the process of discursive formation. Discourse, Foucault argues, never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. Discourse takes place, as forms of events, across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society (Hall 2001: 73). Following Foucault, Butler employs a genealogical critique that investigates 'the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses' (Butler, 1990: ix).

On the other hand, Foucault and Butler turn to examine the power relations by the tool of discourse analysis. They attempt to repudiate the search for the origins of specific historical phenomenon. Rather, for Foucault and Butler, *power* becomes an apparatus consisting of laws, discourses, institutions, ideas, and decisions that connect in various complex, mutable, open-ended, and importantly, confrontational, ways (Foucault 1980: 194). Bio-power, as Foucault terms it, emerges with two sets of techniques: those for population control (demography, public health, housing, migration), and those of discipline (schools, hospitals,

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[20] For Butler, the psychic life is the 'inner life' of consciouness and uncousciousness. This psychic life is generated by the social operation of power. The central theme of her book 'The Psychic Life of Power' is about the way in which psychic life is generated by the social operation of power, and how that social operation of power is concealed and fortified by the psyche that it produced.

factories, army). Together they generate a 'form of concrete arrangement' or 'global strategy' (Foucault 1978: 140).

The conceptions of discourse and power provide a solid foundation for Butler's theorization of how the state makes the nation. Butler sees that there is certain correspondence existing between the state and the nation. Butler argues that those modes of national belonging designated by 'the nation' are thoroughly stipulative and criterial: one is not simply dropped from the nation; rather, one is found to be wanting and so, becomes a 'wanting one' through the designation and its implicit and active criteria (Butler 2007: 30-31). Moreover, the nation-state is inevitably bound up with the recurrent expulsion of national minorities. Butler asserts that the nation-state assumes that the nation expresses a singular and homogeneous national identity to comply with the requirements of the state. The state derives its legitimacy from the nation, which means that those national minorities who do not qualify for 'national belonging' are regarded as 'illegitimate' inhabitants.

The following chapter will discuss how identity plays out in nation / state building for China and Tibet by engaging mainly constructivist and critical theorist's political theory. Drawing on critical theory, mostly poststructualist, feminist, and postcolonialist's writing, the following chapter will show there is nothing static, coherent, and natural about the national identity for either China or Tibet, and how contested and unsustainable a collective identity is, and how failing it is as the principle of community building.

Chapter 3. National identity in China and Tibet

From India to Algeria and Cuba to Vietnam, the state is the poisoned gift of national liberation. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 134)

This chapter explores the nature of national identity in both China and Tibet, and how it is constructed and contested. The Tibet Question is primarily about the conflictual identifications between China and Tibet. Tibet's nationalistic movement is immediately tied up with China's own national imagination[21]. Thus, the discussion of China's nationalism in the first section becomes the logical starting point of the identity dispute between China and Tibet. The second section examines in detail the complex and discursive construction of Tibet's national identity through the identity content and contestation framework. And the last section explores the problematics of the Tibetan identity, by focusing on the hegemonic and contested nature of the Tibetan identity and in fact any collective identity.

3.1 Nationalism and sub-state nationalism in PRC

National identity is notoriously hard to define, let alone to analyse in practice. Perhaps it is more appropriate, as Jenkins suggests, to unpack the processes of this *identification* (Jenkins 2006: 15). The rise of Chinese power has attracted much scholarly interest on Chinese national identity and Chinese nationalism. Culturalists have long been dominant in the field. They tend to base their argument on China's culture and history, as well as its humiliation experience with the West (Johnston 1996: 218; Zheng 1999: 17). Recently, different views

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[21] There are certainly different types of nationalism, such as, ethnic nationalism, liberal nationalism, civic nationalism etc. For more detail discussion, see Day. G & Thompson, A. (2004). Theorizing Nationalism. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. In any case, both the Chinese and Tibetan nationalism more fit in the ethnic nationalism. It is, however, important to point out that critical theorist, especially Butler, is in general sceptical about any form of nationalism.

arise in the literature, which discuss Chinese national identity and nationalism in a more contextual manner, and start to include more institutional analysis (Guang 2005: 487-514; Callahan 2004; Carlson 2009[22]). These context-embedded discussions of Chinese identity, this paper suggests, have begun to move beyond traditional essentialist view of a China in a 'black box', and take on the task of unpacking the vast and heterogeneous subject of the Chinese nation. The section briefly examines how state institutions define and limit identity politics in PRC. Despite Beijing's ongoing attempts to formulate a singular definition of Chinese national identity, political scientists have demonstrated the multi-faceted and contested nature of the Chinese nation.

It is almost a truism today to say that national identity is socially constructed. It is, however, particularly true when it comes to a vast country like China. Prominent Sinologist Wang explains the concept 'Chineseness' in terms of the nature of being China, or the nature of being someone Chinese (Wang 2009: 201). The concept of a Chinese nation, in fact, is a very recent construct. According to Yojiro, '*minzu*' is a close concept to nation in Chinese language, which was introduced from Meiji Japan to late Qing China, and it was more identified with race (Yujiro 2001: 366). The first wave of nationalism in China arose during the ethnic tension between Manchu and Han. In 1911 when the Republic of China was born, a Chinese nation was invented by Sun Yat-sen as a natural and voluntary community of people. Under Sun's conception, all of the non-Han 'races' were now Chinese too. Yujiro argues that the notion of a Chinese nation was used by Sun as a concept with nationalised race/ethnicity for the necessity and purposes of unification of the newly formed state.

The nation of China is never a singular and coherent subject if we take it from a deconstruction point of view. According to historians, there was 'division of five races' back in the early 1900s, namely Han, Manchu, Mongol, Uighur, and Tibetan. Since the establishment of PRC, there are officially recognised 56 ethnicities. Meanwhile, many scholars start to challenge the notion of Chineseness as a national identity and argue that the involuntarily and ubiquitously usage of the term is based on a historical construct and that

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[22] Carlson points to three major flaws in the study of Chinese nationalism and advocates a turn to the broader question of national identity formation. See Carlson 2009. "A Flawed Perspective: the Limitations inherent within the study of Chinese nationalism" Nations and Nationalism 15(1): 20-35.

possibly there is not much inherent essence in that 'identity' (Yojiro 2001; Reid 2009; Wang Gungwu 2009).

The state plays a central role during the processes of identity formation. During the state-building time, elites sought to overlay nation and state to gain mass identification with their particular program to obtain political authority over the nation. The primary tool used by the state is the political system. Stockton asserts that the process of national identity construction is a political struggle by a ruling power to implement an agenda to ensure self-rule and civic or cultural allegiance to the state (Stockton 2008: 101). Since the establishment as a one-party state, PRC has been inevitably engaging with largely non-liberal forms of national identity construction, with the goal of elites consolidating their political dominance over a society, discouraging or even suppressing political pluralism.

Above all, political control is the primary form of national identity construction by the CCP. After generations of struggles in political power and attempts of political reforms, under the rule of *Mao*, *Deng*, *Jiang*, and *Hu*, the CCP monopoly remains intact. Pei makes a strong case arguing that the political reform is far from sufficient for sustainable economic development in the PRC (Pei 2006). According to Pei, despite all the institutional reforms in the political system, such as mandatory retirement of government officials, the strengthening of the National People's Congress, legal reform, experiments in village election, the ruling CCP continues to wield enormous authority in every single aspect of political life, from lawmaking to administrative bureaucracy, from elections to policy making. The post-Tiananmen era even sees the tightening of the CCP central rule.

National identity formation is always linked to the political hegemony and legitimacy of the state. This is particularly true in the PRC. The CCP always insists that local concerns must give way to party-defined national interests and ideals, and it has the power and capacity to ensure this. The CCP enforces local responsiveness to central commands through its system

of appointments, the *nomenklatura* system [23]. The party's Central Committee controls appointments, promotion, and removal of government and party officials at all levels. National identity is framed and shaped from top to bottom by the CCP. Free-flowing ideas thus are kept at a minimum. Callahan asserts that in Beijing's discourse, the nation-state is naturalized as the sole legitimate political community, and the unity of the Chinese nation is taken for granted as its natural state (Callahan 2004: 189).

Secondly, economic development and the free market penetration usually bring about freedom of identity expression. From the start of the 'reform and open' policy by *Deng*, until 1989, there appeared some degree of free public discussion of politics and cultures. The voices and practices of ethnic groups, clans, local communities emerged and called into question of the national identity: what is it being a Chinese, and who defines it? Parris' case study of Wenzhou local identity, and the southern coastal region more generally, shows the rise and fall of localism vis-à-vis CCP's central control (Hoover et al. 1997: 123-146). Prominent Tibetologist Shakya points out that the protests in the late 1980's was partly caused by *Hu Yaobang*'s liberal policies, which led to free debate about the Tibetan identity (Shakya 2008: 7-8). One side turned strongly to Tibetan tradition, religion, and indigenous culture that they were denied during the Cultural Revolution; the other side, mainly young university-educated people, attempted to modernize the Tibetan identity with an indigenous critique of the Tibetan past. Wenzhou and Tibetan local identities certainly have not succeeded under the CCP's rule in the end. Nor has the localism become the catalyst of civic pluralism in Mainland China.

Localism or Nativism, as in the case of Wenzhou and Tibet, often is the threshold leading to cultural and political pluralism. Lai's comparative study between the *xiangtu* nativism of Taiwan in the 1970s and *xungen* nativism of the PRC in the 1980s, explains why it succeeded in Taiwan and failed in PRC (Lai 2008: 159). Lai argues that the party-state in PRC actively promoted a market economy in the 1990s in order to disarm and neutralize the discontent of the populace over the 1989 brutal suppression at Tiananmen Square. The fervent promotion of a market economy fosters the full-blown development of mass consumerism, which

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[23] See Burn's description: 'the nomenklatura system consists of lists of leading positions over which party committees exercise the power of appointment, lists of reserve cadre for the available positions, and the institutions and processes for making the appropriate personnel changes' (Burns 1987: 36, quoted in Huang 2009).

ultimately engulfs *xungen* nativism (the reference to a 'native' realm of moral values and idealistic adherence to tradition-based individual principles) and makes it irrelevant and obsolete. In a similar vein, Ci describes the PRC's turn from communist regime to market economy as a morally catastrophic shift from Utopianism to Hedonism (Ci 1994). Economic reform alone is clearly insufficient for the establishment of cultural and political pluralism in the PRC.

Thirdly, the education system is another key institution for identity construction under state power. In the PRC, education is reduced to be the propaganda of the CCP at the service of the anti-imperialist nationalism. In school, teachers are forced to tell the story again and again to young students that the PRC is the heir of a Han people who had come together millennia earlier in the north China plain of the yellow river valley, built a great civilization, fought to preserve it, and expanded over the centuries by civilizing barbarian invaders (Blum & Jensen 2002: 32-33). Cultural institutions, such as museums, monuments, and other cultural antiquities in the PRC displayed the nationalist history with a singular north China origin to Chinese civilization, and as an ascent from Peking man through an expansionist, amalgamating, and unifying Han culture to the founding of the People's Republic.

Scholars, however, casts doubt on this monolithic rendition of national history. Friedman's study shows that China was a rich amalgam of influences from many areas ever since the late Neolithic and Bronze Age (Friedman 2002: 31-44). According to Chinese archaeologists' founding, the genesis of China's civilization was multi-linear and came not from one source, but from many. Moreover, Friedman uses the examples of Chu culture (now *hu'nan*) and Yue/Cantonese culture (now *guangdong*) in South China, to argue that southern Chinese derive pride and identity from other cultural markers rather than the national narrative of a northern 'cradle' of civilization.

Fourthly, the ethnic identities within the PRC are largely the products of the state's ethnic policy. Mullaney's extensive research convincingly shows that the idea of China as a 'unified, multinational country' (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia*) is a central load-bearing concept within a wide and heterogeneous array of discourses and practices in China (Mullaney 2010). As early

as in Qing, gazetteerists reported to the imperial centre that the Yun'nan province alone was home to over one hundred distinct peoples, with nearly one hundred more in the neibouring province of Guizhou. Only a few decades later, however, Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist regime proclaimed that the country belongs to only one people, 'the Chinese People' (*zhonghua minzu*) to gain the legitimacy of rule. The early communists, along with many Chinese scholars, counter argued against Chiang's mono-national China, with the newly introduced Western concept 'nation' (*minzu*). Following the revolution of 1949, the ethnotaxonomic volatility persists. In the first census of the PRC, between 1953 and 1954, officials tabulated over four hundred different responses to the question of *minzu* identity. This deluge came in response to the Communist Party's promise of ethnonational equality, which entailed a commitment to recognizing the existence of ethnonational diversity to a greater extent than their predecessors had ever been willing to do. Over the course of the subsequent three decades, however, only fifty-five of these were officially recognized, which entailed a remarkable level of categorical compression: from four hundred potential categories of *minzu* identity to under sixty, sanctioned by the state. There are some degrees of good intention in the CCP's early ethnic policy. There are, however, unintended effects as well.

Anthropologist David Wu's study shows, in the case of Bai (an ethnic minority artificially named in PRC), how the government policies of advancing a minority group's social status and the minority's acknowledgement of its new status have had a profound effect on ethnic identity in China (Wu 2002: 170). The naming and framing of ethnic minority groups in the PRC continue to serve the purposes of putting the Han Chinese at the centre with the 'barbarians' at the frontier, and effectively become part of the CCP's grand strategy of building a harmonious society with multi-ethnicities. Wu argues that the Chinese people and Chinese culture have been constantly amalgamating, restructuring, reinventing, and reinterpreting themselves. The seemingly static Chinese culture has been in a continuous process of assigning important new meanings about being Chinese. Indeed, state, particularly cultural and ethnic institutions, such as the State Nationalities Affairs Commission, have had a great deal of power during the process. And what makes it worse is that there is hardly any public debate or private expression on ethnic or local identities under the CCP's regime.

Last, but not the least, Chinese nation building is accompanied with the consistent exclusion or separation of religion from the state. The CCP policies towards religious groups were essentially based on Marxist ideology. In China, it means a mixture of Chinese agnosticism, Han nationalism, and Marxism. Marxist philosophy maintains, 'Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world,…it is the *opium* of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness' (Mukherjee 2010). This state ideology determines that the CCP's policies towards religious groups are generally in line with anti-religious traditions and repressing religious organizations.

The central Committee of the CCP clearly stated, 'religion had its own cycle of emergence, development and demise and religion will soon disappear from human history naturally only through the long term development of Socialism and Communism, when all objective requirements are met'. It also stresses, 'We communists are atheists and must unremittingly propagate atheism and yet at the same time we must understand that it will be fruitless and extremely harmful to use simple coercion in dealing with people's ideological and spiritual questions and this includes religious questions' (Mukherjee 2010: 469). In practice, religious groups enjoyed religious freedom only if they spoke in line with the propaganda of the party. Intransigent or independent religious leaders were singled out, harassed, publicly denounced, and removed from office. Above all, religious believers would have to root out all counter revolutionary activity or 'feudal reactionary poisonous weeds hiding under the cloak of religion'.

The above discussion shows that state and political institutions have a remarkable impact on identity. State does not constitute identity, except in extreme cases (totalitarian regimes – Nazi, Mao, or in Orwell's *1984*). The state, however, can reinforce and influence identity markers (ethnic, cultural, religious ones) by state mechanisms and policymaking. Hoover et al. argue that the state cannot provide an identity to its citizens, but it can *displace* internal processes of maturation and growth by substituting identity foreclosure, as in colonialism, the replication of stereotypes, as in nationalism, and the resulting negative identities for 'aliens,

foreigners, and even natives' (Hoover et al. 1997: 40). Culture or identity is not in itself, and of itself, decisive, while the state is able to decide among numerous contending regional or cultural narratives. The political landscape rightly reflects the reason why the public discussion of plural identities remains stagnant within the PRC.

To sum up this section, the monolithic political system in the PRC clearly leads to the Monism of national identity discourse and what counts as Chinese. And this, in turn, is at the service of the legitimatization of the CCP's rule in Mainland China. There is a tension in the Chinese identity construct in the PRC: an inclination to authoritarian collectivistic nationalism in Beijing leads to a *centripetal*[24] national identity building; on the other hand, this centralized identity construct does little justice to the diverse historical and social reality within the vast territories and heterogeneous populations. This tension between the highly centralized institutions and vastly diverse sociality has a tendency to foster regional ethnic conflicts once the centre collapses, as witnessed in post-communist Russia[25].

3.2 National identity and Tibet

The Chinese national identity is by no means a singular and homogeneous entity, as discussed in the last section. Nor is the identity of Tibet inherently natural, static, or uncontaminated vis-à-vis the Chinese one. What is Tibet? What makes Tibet distinctively a nation? Who is Tibetan? What makes Tibetan distinctively different from others such as Chinese? Despite this vastly increased and broad-ranging interest in 'identity', the concept itself remains something of an enigma (Fearon 1999: 3). At the same time 'identity' has, however, become a key term in the vernacular idiom of contemporary politics (Brubaker 2000: 2). This contradiction is particularly true in the debate of the Tibet Question. This section examines the discursive and contested construction of the Tibetan identity. Why are the authorities of China and Tibet able to construct a completely different Tibetan identity based on an opposite account of Tibetan history? Where has this Tibet Question come from?

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24 See McCrone's camparison of national identity between Britain and France. McCrone, D. 2002. "Who do you say you are?" Ethnicities 2(3): 301-320. He describes national identity construction in France is centripetal.
25 See Laitin's study of ethnic conflict and violence in Russia. Laitin. 1998. Identity in Formation. New York: Cornell University Press.

The disputed history of Tibet

History is long and complex for Tibet, as well as China (Figure 3.1). And we tend to forget that China and Tibet, as political subjects, their ontological meanings and the substance are never static, and keep evolving over time. This, in turn, further complicates the already disputed relationship.
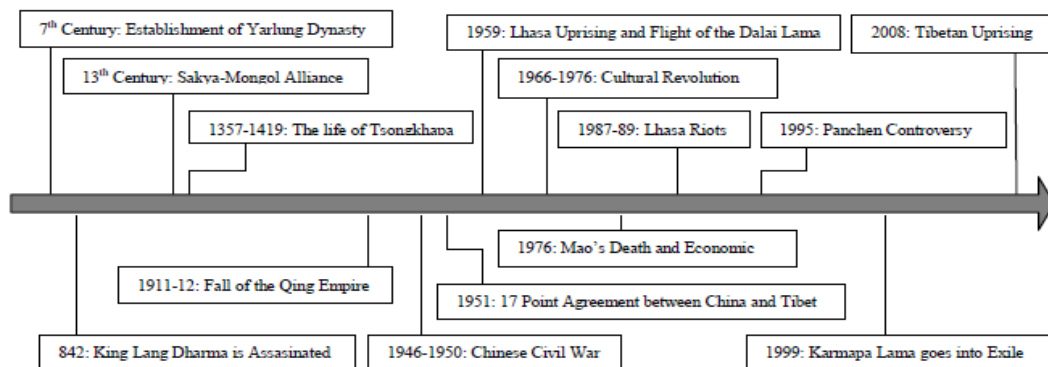

Figure 3.1: Timeline of Tibetan Histroy (Courtesy of Fisher, 2011)

Earliest diplomatic relations can be traced back to the seventh to the ninth century when Tibet was considered a 'unified' empire under King *Songtsen Gampo*, and even *Tang* China had to pay tribute to Tibet. Some argue that during the imperial period, China and Tibet were two distinct and separate states. This view is problematic because the political organization back then is clearly different from the notion of modern state originated from Europe. History narratives are never consensual. Not only the interpretation of history is disputed, but also the elements of history are taken advantage of by political power to construct their version of history, truth, and particularly their seemingly natural and inherited collective identity by selectively drawing on events, heroes, symbols, and other cultural markers. The manner of how the CCP contextualizes its claim of Tibet in its own narrative of history postulates that neighboring states and peoples, that China has conquered and assimilated, have been actors in an inexorable historical process that destined them to be 'integral parts of China,' incapable of true nationhood on their own (Blondeau & Buffetrille 2008: 12). It is equally true that the Tibetan authority constructs the narratives of its own version of history and naturalizes the nationhood of Tibet as if it was a pre-existing and pre-given geographical and political entity.

One of the biggest disputes, for instance, is Tibet's political status after the collapse of the Qing. The claim by the TGIE and some western commentators is that Tibet was independent from 1912 to 1951. They argue that when Qing was expulsed after the revolution in 1911, Tibet declared 'independence'. However, the PRC claims that many provinces also declared 'independence' in China as an end of the Qing's rule rather than the establishment of a new nation. In 1919, the then Dalai Lama in receiving a delegation of the national patriotic and anti-imperialist May 4th Movement declared that 'he had never established good terms with Britain and…had never had any intention of separating Tibet from China' (Blondeau & Buffetrille 2008: 39-40). Mukherjee, in contrast, argues that the simple reality of the installation of the 14th Dalai Lama needed the approval of the national government is sufficient proof that Tibet did not possess any independent sovereignty during that period (Mukherjee 2010). Nonetheless, historians have showed the Tibetan status vis-à-vis China is between tribute state and suzerain state, and varied from time to time. Tibet is more of a contingent pseudo-state than a clear cut either sovereign state or part of China. History is far more complex than the state authority's propaganda. The ways in which the opposing narratives and discourses construct the history inevitably tie up to their attitude laden with 'identity' bias.

Much ink has been spent on the topic of Tibetan identity and its sub-state nationalist movement, yet little has been committed to a comprehensive and systematic discussion of Tibetan national identity as such. The use of the concept 'identity' has been criticized as too analytically loose to be as useful a tool. As a result, Abdelal et al. propose to solve this 'identity crisis' by developing the analytical rigor and methodological imagination that seeks to make 'identity' a more measurable variable (Abdelal et al. 2006: 695). Their analytic framework approaches the troubling term 'identity' by two dimensions – content and contestation. The content of social identities takes the form of four non-mutually-exclusive types: constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons, and cognitive models. The Contestation dimension of social identities refers to the degree of agreement within a group over the content of shared identity. By the use of this framework, Abdelal et al. believe that the four types of content encompass the variety of meanings in social identities, while

contestation over content addresses the fluidity and contextual nature of identities. The framework thus provides a useful platform to examine how social identities are constructed by discourses characterized by rival powers and contested representations. The following section will discuss each form of the contents and its contestations.

Constitutive norms

The first form of content, constitutive norms, refers to the formal and informal rules that define group membership. They are the normative content of a collective identity that specifies its constitutive rules, the practices that define that identity and lead other actors to recognize it (Abdelal et al. 2006: 697). What defines Tibet as a nation? What is the group membership for Tibetans and what is it constituted of? On the official website of the Tibet Government-in-exile, there are five elements listed under 'About Tibet': His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the geographic facts of Tibet, national flag, national anthem, and their global governing organizations. Interestingly these national elements are not much different from the PRC's early ethnic classification criteria informed by Stalin to determine *minzu*: a common language, a common territory, a common economy, and a common psychological nature manifested in a common culture (Kolas & Thowsen 2005: 38). In what follows, this section examines how the Tibetan identities are constructed and contested in four constitutive norms: religion, language, territory and populations, and historical symbols.

First of all, religion has supreme importance that it is the core of the constitutive contents of Tibetan identity. For indigenous people in Tibet, His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, *Tenzin Gyatso*, is the supreme symbol of their communities, their identification, and their aspiration for statehood. As the reincarnating spiritual and political leader of Tibet, the roots of his lineage trace further back in time, to 'the mythological beginning, for the bodhisattva of compassion, of whom the dalai Lama is the human incarnation,…is also the progenitor of the Tibetan people' (Lopez 1998: 184, quoted in Houston & Wright 2003: 217). Tibetan historian Shakya also said, 'Buddhism had always been seen as the core of Tibetan identity, and its clergy the epitome of Tibetanness' (Shakya 1999: 419). Indeed, the Dalai Lama is the epitome of Tibetan belief and religion, which in turn holds the key for both Tibetans and outsiders to

understand how the people in Tibet organize their life, the nature of authority, and the religious, political, and legal ideologies that constitute Tibetan identities.

According to Tibetan religious history, the arrival of Buddhism was a staggered achievement since the seventh century. A highly influential fourteenth century ritual text, the *Mani Kabum*, describes this process in terms of the compassionate intervention of the Buddha-cumbodhisattva *Chenresig*, a celestial deity and manifestation of the Buddha Amitabha (Mills 2003: 12). In various forms, *Chenresig* is then said to have chaperoned the nascent Tibetan race. In contemporary Tibet, the Dalai Lama is now considered by the Gelugpa, the Yellow Hat sect, and many other Tibetan Buddhists to be the primary earthly manifestation of *Chenresig*.

These indigenous narratives, however, are themselves problematic. The narratives of Tibetan religious histories are very much state mandate histories, the stories of the Kings. From an anthropological point of view, those founding myths of the nation are more pious reconstructions rather than independent history. Anthropology shows that the Tibetan regions of the early time, before the empire period, were barren and politically fragmented wastelands, populated by normadic herders, brigands and local warlords, whose religious life was dominated by local mountain worship and other earth cults. This heterogeneous indigenous ritual life is now often subsumed under the wider rubric of *Bon* back then, or Tibetan Buddhism today (Mills 2003: 8).

The domination of Tibetan Buddhism nowadays is the result of long struggle and power politics in history. Today *Bon* still forms a structured doctrine. At different times in history, its relationship with Buddhism was rather unfriendly. Adherents of *Bon* were periodically persecuted and often had to convert to Buddhism. After a long struggle with the TGIE, the Bonpo finally managed to speak to the Dalai Lama in person. In 1978 the Dalai Lama acknowledged the *Bon* religion as a school with its own practices, which meant an important step towards an integration of the *Bon* community in the Tibetan exile community.

Under the narratives of the Tibetan authority, history is simplified and Tibetans are naturalized with only one common national religion. For historians and anthropologists, the indigenous historical narratives are clearly different from 'objective' histories. It is equally unjustifiable if the CCP ignore the Tibetan people's lived experience of religious belief, and try to 'modernize' them overnight. For Marxist CCP, the religious domination of Tibetan society renders Buddhist ideology hegemonic, suppressing the natural political consciousness of the peasant class. The strategy of coercively secularizing the religious Tibetans by the CCP, however, is in itself another form of hegemonic domination of the minority groups with different beliefs. After all, the indigenous narrative of Tibet's transformation by Buddhism feeds into the subtle discourses about Tibetan's religious identity, which constitutes a central plank in a series of understandings, about Buddhism's institutional presence, and the ubiquitous and ever-present influence of chthonic forces on the character of Tibetans as people, whose position in the cultural and religious imaginations of Tibetans is significant (Mills 2003: 8). All of these ways of life can not be changed overnight for the Tibetans. The PRC has to replace the coercive strategy towards the Tibetan's religion with a more accommodating one.

Secondly, language has always been the focal point of national identity. Tibet is imagined as a nation by the Tibetans because Tibetan is a language 'spoken primarily on the high plateau north of the Himalaya' (Norbu 2001: 383). Norbu argues that the regional variations of Tibetan are only dialects and accents. As one of the main criteria of ethnic minority defined by Stalin, languages have received a great deal of attention during the ethnic classification project for Chinese scholars. Minority languages are classified in subgroups, branches, groups, and language families. Scholars disagree on a method of classifying, for example, Tibeto-Burman languages and especially on distinguishing languages from dialects. For instance, many Tibetans in Sichuan speak languages other than Tibetan. Of a total of 308,467 Tibetans in Ngaba Prefecture in 1982, there were diverse languages or dialects being used by the locals (Table 3.1).

Among them, *Ergong* and *Baima* are only recently confirmed languages. According to a Chinese government white paper, ten ethnic groups in China use thirteen written languages that have been 'created or improved with the help of the government', including the *Miao*, *Naxi*, *Lisu*, *Hani*, *Va*, *Dong*, *Jingpo*, and *Tu* languages (Kolas & Thowsen 2005: 38-41). As anthropologists suggest, defining a particular spoken language as a dialect or a

Language/Dialect speaking:	Population:
Tibetan Amdo dialect	153,000
Jiarong language	91,000
Qiang language	41,000
Ergong language	11,000
Baima language	4,000
Chinese	8,000

Table 3.1: Language diversity in Ngaba Prefecture
(Courtesy of Kolas & Thowsen 2005)

separate language is an extremely difficult task with obvious political consequences and is therefore very often controversial. For example, the claim that *Baima* is a separate language is tied to a dispute over whether the *Baima* constitute their own ethnic group or are, as now classified, Tibetan. These diverse languages clearly cannot be subsumed by a common language of Tibetan and explained by regional variation of dialects and accents.

Thirdly, territory has long been an important foundation for an 'imagined community'. According to the TGIE, under Chinese rule Tibet is divided into the following administrative units (Figure 3.2):

a) Tibet Autonomous Region,

b) Qinghai Province,

c) Tianzu Tibetan Autonomous County and Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province,

d) Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Mili Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan Province,

e) Dechen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province.

The total Tibetan population in Tibet is 6 million. Of them, 2.09 million live in the Tibet Autonomous Region TAR and the rest in the Tibetan areas outside the TAR.[26] According to this TGIE's narrative, one quarter of the PRC's territory belongs to Tibetans. Norbu asserts that the Tibetan Plateau is a unique geographical entity in and by itself which crystallized Tibetan national identity (Norbu 2001: 384).
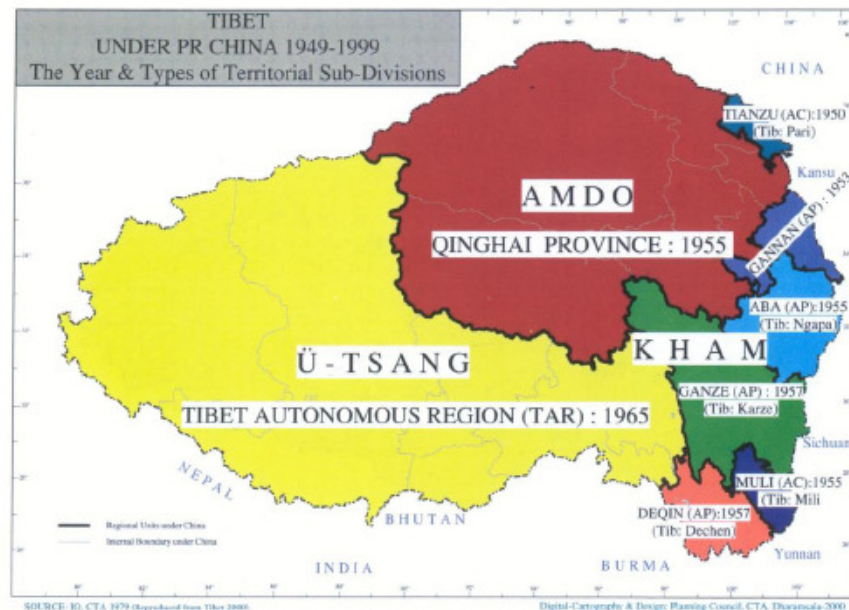

Figure 3.2: The map of Ethnographic Tibet (Courtesy of Fisher 2011)

Remarkably, Tibetans were so divided prior to 1950 that they did not have a single term that referred to all Tibetan people, especially not one that was acceptable to eastern Tibetans. While today some Tibetans in eastern Tibet might willingly call themselves '*Bomi*' or '*Bopa*', such terms historically meant people from central Tibet, a region at the centre of the current TAR, including Lhasa, Shigatse, and parts of Lhoka and Kongpo (Bertrand & Laliberte 2010: 221). In fact, historians pose that at the beginning of the Tibetan popular nationalist movement in 1957, no term could be agreed upon by all of those whom we today call 'Tibetans', so they called themselves simply 'tsampa eaters' as this conveyed a distinct sense of their shared commonality, as opposed to the Chinese 'rice eaters', without privileging any one regional designation.

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[26] See the information from the official website of the TGIE: http://tibet.net/about-tibet/tibet-at-a-glance/ (access on 09/02/2012).

Fourthly, the modern Tibetan identity is heavily dependent on historical symbols to hold the diverse populations together. According to TGIE's narrative, during the reign of the seventh-century king, *Songtsen Gampo*, Tibet was one of the mightiest empires in Central Asia. Tibet, then, had an army of 2,860,000 men. Each regiment of the army had its own banner. The banner of 'Ya-ru To' regiment had a pair of snow lions facing each other, that of 'Ya-ru Ma' a snow lion standing upright, springing upwards towards the sky, while the banner of 'U-ru To' regiment had a white flame against a red background. This tradition continued until the Thirteenth Dalai Lama designed a new banner and issued a proclamation for its adoption by all the military establishments. This banner became the present Tibetan national flag[27]. This narrative itself recognizes the multi-regiment structure of the ancient Tibetan society, not to mention the modern construction of the historical symbols.

Tibetan in Exile not only reinterprets the meaning of some selective traditions, but it also establishes entirely new ones as well. For example, in order to commemorate the 87,000 'Tibetans' killed during the Lhasa uprising in 1959, a ceremony is held by the TGIE featuring the statement by the Dalai Lama, a performance of Tibetan folk dances and a rendition of the Tibetan national anthem written in exile (Kolas 2008: 57). All these activities function to foster the perception of a universal identity of Tibet.

Religion, population, territory, national flag, and national anthem, are all constitutive norms that contribute to the hegemonic formation of the 'imagined community' in Tibet. However, as the discussion above shows, none of those constitutive norms are inherently static or essential. Rather, each of them is a historical construction and a political invention, by silencing other forms of life.

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[27] The description of how the national symbols were born in the TGIE website: http://tibet.net/about-tibet/the-tibetan-national-flag/ (access on 09/02/2012).

Social purposes

Social purposes refer to the goals that are shared by members of a group, and define group interests and preferences. This purposive content is analytically similar to the common sense notion that what groups *want* depends on who they *think* they are (Abdelal et al. 2006: 698). In other words, a group identity can be analyzed by the members' collective needs, goals, and aspirations in the future. The literature on Tibet has provided plenty of case studies on how nationalist movements rely on a variety of purposive claims, such as nation and state building, territorial claims, religious freedom, cultural preservation, and economic development.

For the Tibetan authority, national survival is the primary goal of the Tibetan nationalist movement, and arguably the primary purposive content of Tibetan identity. Although the motivation behind the recent uprising in 2008 varies, the debate of the motivation has helped understand the purposive character of a Tibetan identity. Many scholars maintain that the recent uprising in 2008 was a Tibetan response to the identity insecurity caused by Chinese ethnic policy, migration, and cultural imperialism. Shakya, for example, wrote in the New Left Review, 'I do not think the demonstrations were principally to do with economic disparities or disadvantages suffered by Tibetans. Rather, I think there were defensive protests, concerning questions of national identity' (Shakya 2008: 19). How does this national identity demand come into political prominence?

The Dalai Lama's envisioning of a Tibetan statehood has been evolving. In the nineteen eighties, the Dalai Lama refused to even imply that Tibet is part of China. In 1987, the Dalai Lama said, 'Tibetans and Chinese are distinct peoples each other with their own country, history, culture, language and way of life'. Later however Dalai Lama made a clearer blueprint for Tibet's state building that upholds the principals of religious freedom and democracy, without explicit independence claim. In his 1988 Strasbourg Proposal before the European Parliament, he laid out his initial positions on autonomy that the PRC would remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy, while Tibet would be governed by its own constitution or basic law[28]. The Tibetan government would be comprised of a popularly elected chief executive, a bicameral legislature and an independent legal system. And it would have a

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[28] See the official website of the Dalai Lama: http://www.dalailama.com/messages/middle-way-approach

special duty to safeguard and develop religious practice (He & Sautman 2005: 608). This proposal gradually formed the famous 'Middle Way Approach' by the Dalai Lama, which was formalized by the TGIE. This TGIE claims that this approach is adopted in democratic way, but its legitimacy is clearly in question as it is only approved within the TGIE, excluding the majority of the Tibetans in the PRC.

The Tibet In Exile plays a central role for the construction of a pan-Tibetan identity. The Dalai Lama is seen not only the spiritual and religious leader in the greater Tibetan communities, but also the founder and head of the parliamentary Tibetan government-in-exile, the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies. For Tibetans, the Dalai Lama will eventually become the head of a democratic state with the separation of the power: legislative, judiciary, and executive (Houston and Wright 2003: 221). The fight for a Tibetan statehood by TGIE dominates the projected future for ordinary Tibetans. This purposive prospect for the ordinary Tibetans, in turn, has been politically naturalized by the Tibetan nationalist discourse.

Secondly, religious belief is constructed not only as the core of their distinctive culture, but also the purposes of life for Tibetans. One Chinese historian pointed out, Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture is largely one and the same; their relationship is like the one between blood and flesh, which is inseparable (Zheng 2010: 55). Tibetan Buddhism is the root of Tibetan ethnicity and it provides the cultural fabric to form and congregate Tibetan people. Religion has been part of many Tibetans' life for generations. Besides the fact that most Tibetans were spiritually devout Buddhists, there are some political, social, and economic purposes that explain why religion has been so deeply embedded in their life, particularly before the democratic reform by the CCP. Firstly, under the combined religious and secular system of government, becoming a monk or nun was a very important way to lift oneself up on the social ladder in the highly stratified society of Tibet. Secondly, monasteries are the major supplier of literacy and knowledge because of the shortage of systematic education. Thirdly, for those poor families, sending their children to monasteries could mean fewer mouths to be fed at home, and better life for their children in a religious setting (Zheng 2010: 61).

Moreover, the fight for religious freedom of the Tibetans living in the PRC has become another mobilizing force for the Tibetan nationalist movement. The PRC officials claim that there are no restrictions on religious belief, whereas the TGIE maintain there is no religious freedom in Tibet (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 7). There are obvious state regulations on religious practice in Tibet by the PRC. Anyone wanting to become a monk has to seek permission from the county-level authorities, and there is number limit. As for the number of monks and nuns, it is quite contested. The official figure is 120,000; Shakya's estimation is about 180,000 (Shakya 2008: 16). Shakya also argues that economic development by the PRC actually helped to generate the revival of the monasteries. This complicated situation of religious freedom in Tibet defies the one-sided story told by either PRC or the TGIE.

Thirdly, the Tibetans' nationalist movement, from the outset, proclaims to counter the PRC's policy of the dilution of the Tibetan culture from the Han. As Norbu persistently asserts, 'Tibet represented a unique case of a full-blown Mahayana Tantric Buddist cultural category that was hard to find in other parts of Asia'. (Norbu 2001: 382). Many Tibetans expressed their fears of the CCP's potential conspiracy hidden beneath, such as the critical trend of sinocization in all aspects of day-to-day life in Tibet. From the mid 1990s, under the new strategy of 'develop the west' (*xibu da kaifa*) China has significantly increased its economic input, and consequently more and more Han Chinese migrate into the TAR, particularly the urban areas. One of the greatest fears that Tibetans have is that they will become a minority in their own land, and that Tibetan culture is being diluted not only by Han migration to the region, but also by interracial marriage with the local population.

Both sides have their story for this population 'myth'. The PRC census count of the Han population in TAR was obviously underestimated, particularly ignoring the floating and military migration. Some argue that the Han immigrants have dramatically changed the demographic composition and atmosphere of cities like Lhasa, and the process is beginning to expand to smaller towns. Andrew Fisher's study shows, however, that the Han population inflow varied over different periods, different regions, and the changes of the PRC's economic policy (Blondeau & Buffetrille 2008: 145). Above all, the exile allegation of 7.5 million Han, contrasting 6 million Tibetan, refers to all the Tibetan areas in China, including provinces

such as Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan. Second, Han in the Tibetan areas are mostly concentrated in cities and towns and very visible, while Tibetan rural areas have remained mostly Tibetans. Moreover, the outflows of population, both Han and Tibetans, have consistently exceeded inflows in areas such as Qinghai, and mostly in the TAR, since the beginning of the reform period, largely because of the hardship in the highlands. A fair share of Tibetan refugee migration to India can thus be understood as young Tibetans leaving in search of better opportunities rather than simply because of the Han influx. Lastly, the sharp increases of the net inflows of migration observed in the TAR since 2000 have been stimulated by the massive increases in subsidies under the Western Development Strategy. Fisher argues that amongst these migration inflows most of them were disproportionately male and seasonal migrants (Blondeau & Buffetrille 2008: 148-149). Therefore, while the PRC' needs to address the Tibetans' hostile responses to the development strategy; the TGIE's 'population colonization' allegation is equally exaggerating. Partly fueled by the nationalist movement, the protests in Lhasa were not only against the CCP government, but also against ordinary Chinese people who have settled in Tibet (Shakya 2008: 19). This shows the aspect of exclusion in the Tibetan nationalist movement, as it is found in most countries' nationalist movement. If this pursuit for national identity goes extreme, it becomes essentially a form of racism against Han and other ethnicities.

Fourthly, a demand for basic human rights has been one of the main uniting purposes for Tibetans since the first uprising in 1959. The PRC usually present a very bleak picture of the former 'feudal' Tibetan society in order to show the improvement in the Tibetans' standard of living and social status after the communist reform. The TGIE, however, declared that 'the basic human rights are being denied to Tibetans…Tibet is in virtual lockdown. Foreigners have been barred from travelling to Tibet now and the entire region is essentially under undeclared martial law.[29]' While the PRC's picture of the old Tibetan 'feudal serfdom' is overly simplified, Tibet was more or less a very hierarchical society with strata in which there was a separation between clergy and lay people. The latter were divided into three strata: the aristocracy, the common people, and the lower class, including farmers. There were also subgroups amongst farmers. Only the 'small householders' of farmers were strictly serfs

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[29] http://tibet.net/2012/01/26/statement-by-kalon-tripa-dr-lobsang-sangay-on-the-recent-killings-of-tibetans-by-the-p-r-chinas-government/

(Blondeau & Buffetrille 2008: 295). It's undisputable that the takeover of the PRC has brought a certain amount of modernization to Tibet. The research by Goldstein, Jiao, Beall, and Tsering endorses that the PRC's rule, particularly the post-Mao de-collectivization in Tibet has clearly brought improvement to the livelihood and standard of living of rural Tibetans (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 211).

However, it is inaccurate to consider this modernization by the PRC without its manifold negative effects, such as environment devastation and human rights issues. Goldstein et al. argue that modernization has also created a new form of economic stratification and a stratum of very poor rural household (Sautman & Dreyer 2006: 211). In a similar vein, Hu and Salazar's research shows that the urbanization and industrialization through the swift penetration of the market toward the rural areas is happening in Tibet today just as they started in coastal east China since the late 1970s (Hu & Salazar 2008). The *Hukou* system has been the dominant, state-enforced institution of classifier of social distinction in Tibet as well as the rest of China. As a result, the institutionalized discrimination of urban against rural is stronger (even more continuously present) than the non-institutionalized prejudices between ethnic groups, i.e. Tibetan and Han. Hu and Salazar's study aptly demonstrates that the marginalized people very often use the political strength of ethnic identity as the 'master identity' to pursue their political needs against the state. Table 3.2 and 3.3 (Zheng 2010: 40) show the large urban-rural income gap in the TAR compared to the average of the PRC. As evidenced in the recent Lhasa riots in 2008, the majority of the crimes were committed by the rural migrants.

Average income in rural areas (TAR)	Average income in urban areas (TAR)	Average income in rural areas (National)	Average income in urban areas (National)
2788	11,131	4140	13,786

Table 3.2 Rural and urban average income in TAR 2007 (compared with the national, in RMB)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Tibet	4.8	4.4	4	3.7	4
China	2.76	3.21	3.22	3.28	3.3

Table 3.3: Urban-rural income gap in TAR and China 2003-2007 (times)

At the heart of the construct of the Tibetan identity is an escape from the East Han Chauvinism and Communism, and a return to indigenous central Asia, being closer geopolitically and ideologically to the liberal West. The above analysis shows that there are underlying aspirations, needs, or goals in the construction of the Tibetan identity sanctioned by the TGIE, which is at once intertwined with other non-identity dimensions, such as economic, religious, and political pursuits. More importantly, ethnic or national identity is often the most effective group classification for political elites to mobilize the mass for their own political agenda. It is thus more illuminating to examine the purposive disagreement between the Tibet and China rather than the ambiguous and often deceptive 'identity' conflicts.

Relational comparisons

Relational comparisons define an identity group by what it is *not*, i.e., the way it views other identity groups, especially where those views about the other are a defining part of the identity (Abdelal et al. 2006: 698). Barnett argues that identity represents the understanding of oneself in relationship to others. Group identities, for him, are not personal or psychological, but are fundamentally social and *relational*, defined by the actor's interaction with and relationship to others. Therefore, identities may be contingent, dependent on the actor's interaction with others and place within an institutional context (Barnett 1999: 9). From this standpoint, the Tibetan identity is embedded in the 'us' and 'other' relations. The fact that the relations between Tibet and China are never static, and ever evolving, in turn, complicates the way the Tibetan identity is being defined. There are periods of ups and downs in the history of China-Tibet relations.

The CCP's attitude towards ethnic groups has changed over the time. Early Chinese communists, especially those educated in Moscow, were influenced by Lenin's minority policy. Mao experimented with a Leninist federal structure with minority republics. The Manifesto of the Second National Congress of the CCP in July 1922 clearly included statements about national minority, 'the achievement of a genuine republic by the liberation of Mongolia, Tibet and Sinkiang; the establishment of a Chinese federated republic by the unification of China proper.' (Norbu 2001: 368-369). As the communist forces retreated into the southwest, Mao saw a certain level of anti-Chinese sentiment amongst minorities. When Stalin succeeded Lenin, he reduced the rights of the nationalities on the Asian Soviet republics. Mao adopted Stalin's model, partly with a colonial strategic consideration, i.e. creating buffer zones in Tibet against neighboring threats: Britain, the Soviet, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Asian republics of the Soviet Union. As a result, Tibet under the first PRC Constitution was not republic but 'autonomous region' (Wolff 2010: 131-132). Tibet, as a tiny power with weak army, was basically left with no choice but to sign the Seventeen Point of Agreement in 1951. However, under the rule of the PRC, the ethnic consciousness of the Tibetans did not wither away. In fact, it increased.

The act of 'peacefully' uniting Tibet into China has unintentionally sewed the seed of the Tibetan identity. The introduction of Chinese armed forces followed by Communist reform, as well as the influx of Chinese administrative cadres and inhabitants into Tibet since 1951, have given the diverse and historically divided peoples now called Tibetans a visible 'other' against whom to define themselves (Bertrand & Laliberte 2010: 221). During the first period of rule, the CCP sought to work in alliance with Tibet's traditional ruling class. In the beginning, Mao was in no hurry to force socialism upon Tibet but rather court the Elites and ordered a 'Go Slow' policy. Mao intended to rule Tibet by proxy, through Tibet's traditional government but superimposing over it a Chinese Communist structure (Wolff 2010: 146). A honeymoon period followed under this policy. At that time, the 16 year old Fourteenth Dalai Lama thought Buddhism and Marxism could co-exist. He believed that communism could improve the lot of the Tibetan people in material terms by bringing modernization to Tibet. The Dalai Lama spent six months in Beijing, meeting Mao, and taking part in the National People's Congress.

If the trajectory of the history followed this trend, there would have been no 'Tibet Question' today. However, the PRC largely failed to live up to its Marxist ethnic policy. With the passage of time, the PRC's policy and practice towards Tibet shifted to political centralism and Han chauvinism. Its nationality policy held that Communist China would be an indivisible multi-ethnic state with autonomous nationality regions that have very limited freedom on their own affairs. After the 1959 uprising and the flight of the Dalai Lama, the second period 1960-78 saw the extension of Communist reforms and the redistribution of monastic and aristocratic lands, accelerating with the collectivization and mass mobilization of the Cultural Revolution. The relations between the Tibetan monasteries and the CCP deteriorated. Following 1980, there was an era of much greater liberalization and 'Tibetanization' under *Hu Yaobang* until the second uprising in 1989. The recent Chinese policy towards Tibet under President *Hu Jintao* continues the tone of a hardline policy, combined with the economic development strategy and the slogan of anti-splittism and anti-terrorism.

The interrelation and interaction between Tibet and China is an important dimension of the discursive construction of the Tibetan identity. Dawa Norbu rightly observes how the Tibetan ethnicity has been politicized from merely regional identities to more encompassing Tibetan identity by the takeover of the PRC. Before the politicization of Tibetan ethnicity, 'we' and 'they', or Tibetan and non-Tibetan, was a Buddhist differentiation (vaguely) between believers and non-believers. However, since the Chinese takeover in 1959, there has been a growing consciousness, particularly among urban Tibetans, about a pan-Tibetan identity that sharply differentiates itself from the Chinese/Han (Kolas & Thowsen 2005: 42).

The notion of modern Tibet is also largely an institutional invention, particularly, by the PRC's Ethnic Classification Project beginning in 1954. Mullaney's study examines China's Ethnic Classification Project (*minzu shibie*), a collective term for a series of Communist-era expeditions wherein ethnologists and linguists set out to determine once and for all the precise ethnonational composition of the country, so that these different groups might be integrated into a centralized, territorially stable polity (Mullaney 2010). Mullaney's study convincingly

shows how four-hundred would-be *minzu* got squashed into the fifty-five official minorities accepted today. In a similar vein, Tuttle argues that the Chinese state classification of Tibetans (*zangzu*) as a single ethnic group (*minzu*) has given this formerly fragmented group a more cohesive sense of identity (Bertrand & Laliberte 2010: 221).

The PRC's policy toward minorities was implemented through the Nationalities Affairs Commission (NAC). The NAC is meant to pursue a policy of uniting with patriotic bourgeoisie nationalities upper strata in carrying out reforms and economic development in the region (Mukherjee 2010: 471). However, Han chauvinism clearly trumps this policy during the implementation. As early as October 1951, *Zhou Enlai* stated difficulties would soon arise if Han cadres were not educated against chauvinist attitudes, and attacked the 'narrow nationalism' of individual Han who continued to harbor feelings of superiority toward Tibetans. Unfortunately, the Chinese cadres did not listen, and nationality uniting policy gradually gave way to Han chauvinism and a narrow version of Marxism with Chinese characteristics. Chinese propaganda was directed at liberating Tibetans from feudalism and imperialism, and transforming Tibetan local nationalism into proletarian internationalism. A poster campaign of 1951 was intended to depict the might of China, the solidarity of China and the USSR, and the need for Tibetans and Chinese to unite against Anglo-American imperialism (Mukherjee 2010: 472).

As another form of Chinese bureaucracy that oversees the Tibet issues, the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is an affiliated organization under the State Council, which was established in 1954 and remains responsible for the supervision of religious activities (Mukherjee 2010: 472). Officially accepted religions, such as Buddhism and Daoism, have some representation in the government. However, temples and monasteries registered with the RAB were only given a limited degree of freedom. Moreover, the United Front, whose primary target was the Tibetan government, and the co-opt of all political and socio-religious groups, has been working with ideological programs in conflict with the religious ideology of Tibetan Buddhists.

These ups and downs of China-Tibet relations, and the state institutional differentiation and reinforcement of the ethnic groups show how Tibetan national identity comes to rise by the resistance to the 'other'. Tibet and Tibetan as identity, by and large, has been politically and institutionally invented by the rule of the PRC. The relational comparisons above reveal another important dimension in Tibetan identity construction, in which group identity is never pre-existing or static, but fundamentally *relational* and contextual. It is perhaps much more revealing to look at the relaitonality of Tibet and China, rather than dwelling on the wishy-washy concept of 'identity'.

Cognitive models

Cognitive models refer to the worldviews or understandings of political and material conditions and interests that are shaped by a particular identity (Abdelal et al. 2006: 699).

> *'What cognitive perspectives suggest, in short, is that race, ethnicity, and nation are not things in the world but ways of seeing the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one's problems and predicaments, identifying one's interests, and orienting one's action. They are ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of construing sameness and difference, and of 'coding' and making sense of their actions.'* (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov, quoted in Abdelal et al. 2006: 699).

In other words, it is that 'interpretation' matter leads to the identity matter. In the case of contemporary Tibet, there are two issues that epitomize the opposing world views between China and Tibet.

One of the most heated disputes between the PRC and the Tibetan authority is that the Chinese authorities equate any expression of Tibetan identity, be it religious or cultural, with separatism. The PRC seems to think that if it allows any kind of cultural autonomy, it will escalate into demands for secession. In Tibet, everything from newspapers and magazines to music distribution is kept firmly under control, whereas all over China there are increasing

numbers of independent publishing houses. Shakya speaks of a joke in Tibet that the Dalai Lama wants 'one country, two systems', but what people there want is 'one country, one system' – they want the more liberal policies (relatively) that prevail in China also to apply in Tibet (Shakya 2008: 26). There is certainly space for China to tolerate and accommodate the Tibetans' expression of cultural identity as long as it does not escalate to separation. The hardline policy by the PRC has proven unsustainable and counter-effective.

By contrast, the Tibet's pursuit of political rights by the claim of a distinctive and exclusive national identity is equally unconvincing, and it worsens the already deep distrust between two parties. For Tibetans, a unique and distinctive Tibetan identity is a powerful and universal claim to counter the legitimacy of the PRC's rule. While the strategy of mobilization of a unified Tibetan identity functions to challenge the legitimacy of the Chinese development in Tibet, it has its own limitations. It not only essentially discriminates any other non-Tibetans, Han and other ethnic groups, but also leads Tibetans to live in the imagination free from contamination of industrial development, population migration, and cultural exchange. Lopez has put it bluntly: Tibetans are 'prisoners of Shangri-la', captured within the Western images of Tibet and Tibetans as unique (Anand 2007: 84). This prevailing world view of a unique Tibet is a hegemonic construct, and continues to deepen the racial exclusion against the Han, and the political antagonism between the two sides.

The second primary cleavage between China and Tibet is the nature of the PRC's 'develop the west' (*xibu da kaifa*) strategy. The Tibetan authorities equate any effort of economic development with 'cultural genocide'. Dawa Norbu basically perceives the whole 'develop the west' project by the PRC as a Communist conspiracy to assimilate the Tibetan civilization (Sautman 2006: 158). He quoted some of the Chinese officials, that one purpose of the (develop the west) scheme is to 'guarantee the inviolability' of the PRC's borders in the western region, and to 'smash our enemies who want to use poverty and the contradictions between races to create a Kosovo-style crisis in Asia' (Sautman 2006: 159). This is an interesting example to show how 'interpretation' is at work between rival parties. Certainly the purpose of the CCP is not purely for the prosperity and wealth of the Tibetans. It is, however, inevitable for China, in fact for any state, to include strategic consideration and

national interest in large infrastructure building[30]. Norbu's interpretation of the Chinese officials and their policies tends to explain the cognitive processes of how most Tibetans' hostile views towards the PRC are shaped and reshaped by the PRC's statements. In the case of the construction of the Qinghai-Lhasa railway, many pro-Tibetan commentators argue that the railway will definitely increase the influx of the Chinese immigrants and the scope of urbanization, and lead to devastating economic effects on the indigenous population. There is certainly some validity in this criticism of the PRC's wrong treatment of the indigenous tradition. However, the one-sided negation of the PRC's development policies appears equally problematic.

Moreover, the criticism of China's economic development policy in Tibet often simplified China's development model as an idiosyncratic one, i.e. state capitalism. However, it is easy to overlook the multiple roles that China plays in the world economic hierarchy: the West-China-Tibet. For the West, China is by and large a developing country providing cheap labor and products to the West. Between Tibet and China, China is not only the powerful colonizer who is exporting economic growth drive and exerting cultural influence, but also a beneficiary of the abundant and cheap natural and human resources. Between Tibet and China, China plays exactly the same role as the West does vis-à-vis China. As China is integrating into the capitalist globalization, Beijing and the West are in broad agreement on matters such as developing market economies, privatization, and free trade. On the one hand, China gains legitimacy of rule in Tibet because of those economic consensus. On the other hand, the West has had to put Tibet issues behind the priority of economic interdependence with China. In this sense, the West is essentially pro-China. The debate between the Chinese model and the West model is therefore a faulty dichotomy. Tibet, China, and the West are all intertwined in capitalist globalization.

The cognitive models analysis above has shown the conflictual identities between China and Tibet closely tie to their contentious and disputed world views on practical issues. The change of cognitive worldview is a critical step, also arguably the first step, to change the antagonistic political *status quo*. The reason why it is so difficult finding an overlapping view

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[30] In regard to the relations between national interest and discourse by state, see Weldes, J. 1999. Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

between two parties is that each party claims its legitimacy to the 'nation' by the opposing construction of history and identity. There is no possible common ground for both parties because of the inherently exclusive nature of a collective identity. A transformative common ground that breaks away the identity claims, therefore, is needed to create the shared cognitive world view of both parties.

3.3 'Whatever' identity

The previous section has shownu how Tibetan identity has been constructed and contested by dominant discourses through the content and contestation framework, which has helped to reveal the processes of how a collective identity came to *seem* natural. Identity is mostly treated as things to be explained. In social science, scholars take identities both as things *to be explained*, and things that have *explanatory force*, which amounts almost to a scandal (Fearron 1999: 2). It is, however, vastly overlooked whether identity is viable as a concept that has explanatory force. The contested ways of Tibetan identity construction show the problem of the uncritical constructivist approaches. For some constructivist, Tibetans are seen to do things *because* they are religiously Buddhists, or ethnically Tibetans, which effectively essentializes Tibetans as a group.

By contrast, critical theorists assert the possibility of alternative modes of consciousness and identity that are effectively silenced by the dominant ideology. Callahan argues that the analysis of the construction of identity through discourse only covers half of the relations that produce identity. The other half lies behind the face of how identity *seems* like this: the exclusion of the difference (Callahan 2004: xxiii). In what follows, this section explores other marginalized stories that are vastly silenced by the dominant discourses. From a critical approach to the phenomenon of 'identity' matter, we not only need to explain how identity comes to *seem* like this, but also need to criticize it and anticipate a different form of politics that moves beyond identity.

The West and Orientalism

The Tibetan identity debate primarily focuses on China-Tibet relations, with another major actor, the West, being more or less ignored. Postconlonialists maintain that particular encounters between the West and the non-West have shaped the latter, and in the case of Tibet, the West's representational discourses are not reflective of, but actually productive of the Tibetan identity (Anand 2007: 14). The West representation of the Orient is constructed by essentializing and stereotyping the other. Essentialism is the notion that some core meaning or identity is determinate and not subject to interpretation. Inden argues that essentialist's world view tend to ignore the 'intricacies of agency' pertinent to the flux and development of any social system. (Anand 2007: 19). In the colonial context, we find essentialism in the reduction of the indigenous people to an 'essential' idea of what it means to be 'native', for instance, African as singing-dancing-fighting, Chinese as rigid and duplicitous, Tibetans as religious.

A stereotype is a one-sided description of a group or culture resulting from the collapsing of complex differences into single 'card-board cut-out', seeing people as a preset image and 'more of a *formula* than a human being' (Anand 2007: 19). Stereotyping served imperialism at both representational and psychic levels – supporting the idea of parental domination and acting as a kind of perceptual blinder protecting the colonizers from the discomforting consciousness of either poverty or guilt (Lebow 1976: 22, quoted in Anand 2007: 20). Stereotyping is a simplification because it freezes what is otherwise a fluid, contested, complex, always in-becoming identity.

The Western fantasization of Tibet takes a great share of the historical and social construction of the Tibetan-ness. As Anand aptly puts it, Western representation, both academic and popular, has been a crucial factor in shaping the identity of Tibet as a geopolitical entity as well as shaping the identity of the Tibetans (Anand 2007: 21-36). Take the US in Tibet for example. In all the historical accounts to date, the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) involvement in Tibet began in 1956. The late William R. Corson, a Chinese-speaking Marine lieutenant colonel, veteran of the Pacific campaign in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and also an intelligence officer on assignment with the CIA, claimed that he was involved in planning the anti-Chinese revolt in Lhasa in March 1959 and orchestrating the flight of the

Dalai Lama into exile (Grunfeld 2003, 133). Ken Knaus, the author of *Orphans of the Cold War*, recalls, 'we romanticized them, they were orphans to be adopted,…there was a certain sense of romance attached to the Dalai Lama and his cause, a Shangri-la factor,…The State Department posed no opposition, and the Pentagon fell all over themselves to be helpful.' (Grunfeld 2003: 119).

Hardt and Negri rightly point out the two dialectical mechanisms of ethnic nationalism vis-à-vis the West: the construction of an absolute racial difference from the other, and the eclipse of internal differences through the representation of the whole population by a hegemonic group, race, or class. In the anti-colonial struggles, the strategy of 'national protection' is a double-edged sword that at times appears necessary despite its destructiveness (Hardt & Negri 2000: 109). The rise of Chinese nationalism in history has proved this. China's obsession of national unity, nationalist and Communist alike, against the West is precisely the outcome of that destructive nationalist strategy towards the internal national minorities. Today Tibet's struggle for independence would run exactly the same risk of the differentiation externally and eclipse internally. Just like the revolutionary desire of the Black Panthers and the Palestinians, as soon as Tibet begins to form a sovereign state in the name of a nation, its progressive functions and revolutionary quality all but vanquish. While the strategy of mobilizing a unified Tibetan identity and support from the West functions in terms of challenging the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, it also has seriously hindered the Tibetans from imagining its own future community with openness.

Gender and Tibet

Feminists maintain that the narratives of history, and the construction of truth, are fraught with power. Rather than looking at national security from the masculine state perspective, feminists tend to see the broader sense of human security with a bottom up approach (Baylis et al. 2009: 270). Whereas men and masculinity are privileged in ideas of nation and history, women are consistently dispossessed in terms of social recognition of the individual as historical actor. Through the lens of observing women's political practices, feminism reveals women's disturbing presences that break the order of authorized historical narratives and in so doing raise questions about the nature of such order (Mcgranahan 2010: 773).

McGranahan's study of Tibetan women's general absence in battlefields, and the case study of two women, Dorje Yudon and Chime Dolma's actual participation in war, blatantly expose that the Tibetan order of things is deeply gendered as well as Buddhist and hegemonic. Deferral or denial of women's participation in order to serve the general good of society is a phenomenon seen across cultures, political formations, and time periods (McGranahan 2010: 779). In Tibet's context, initially Buddha agreed to ordain women alongside men, but retracted this option for social reasons as Indian society at the time would simply not allow for such equality between men and women. McGranahan argues that the Tibetan inheritance of this Indian social categorization was wholesale such that the idea that women may undermine the monastic order persists in the present day. As a result, religious and social anxieties about women's uncontrollable sexuality continue to have real effects on Tibetan women, their lives, and their bodies. For example, in both dominant Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan cultural practice, women are systematically relegated to lower status. Gutschow argues that gender is not just a 'significant…fault line in Buddhist discourse', but also a hierarchical project in which male , and especially monastic, power is built upon, and at times built by the female body (Mcgranahan 2010: 780). On the battlefield, in particular, the Tibetan soldiers feared that female pollution (menstrual blood, female body in general) could weaken or even destroy fully the power of their protective amulet. The female clearly signals disorder, and thus is discriminated in Buddhist Tibet.

In the same vein, Houston and Wright's research shows how women's voices are silenced in the process of Tibetan nationalist movement and nation building. Drawing on Kerr's study, they maintain that in Tibet women suffer extreme human rights abuses in the form of forced sterilizations, abortions, and genital mutilation (Houston & Wright 2003: 224). The establishment of The Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) in 1959 was to 'raise the public awareness of the abuses faced by Tibetan women in Chinese-occupied Tibet'[31]. In reality, however, the goal of the organization often becomes secondary to the larger nationalist cause. As a result, the TWA is engaged in fighting for the nation, rather than struggling for women's rights.

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[31] See the official website: http://www.tibetanwomen.org/about/ (access on 01/02/2012).

Through the lens of feminism, this section has shown how women are largely ignored in the narratives of Tibetan history, and consistently silenced and discriminated in the nationalist pursuit. Whenever the TGIE declare that they constitute a distinct civilizational category, they tend to forget that about half of the population (the women)'s voice is either vastly absent or effectively misrepresented in their political movement. This poses serious legitimacy question to their universal claim of nationhood.

Other marginalized story tellers of Tibet

Over the Tibetan identity debate, a focus has often been fixed on the dichotomy of 'Tibetans' and 'Chinese'. Regional identities, however, are more or less missed out. Historically, Tibetans have distinguished between three major regions of Tibet: U-tsang, Amdo, and Kham. For some Tibetans, however, these regional identities are still understood as mutually exclusive categories, similar to ethnic categories. For instance, a Lhasa resident would identify a visitor from eastern Tibet as a 'Khampa', not a Tibetan (Kolas 2008: 83).

In contemporary Tibet, ethnic identity is becoming more and more difficult to define, and subject to the influences of modern economic and cultural life. Ethnic identity has become increasingly relevant in Diqing (a Tibetan tourist area) with the rising economic importance of ethnic tourism, where 'ethnicity' is marketed in many different ways. In the new context, Tibetan identity can sometimes be a valuable asset. Kolas observed that some locals who are not Tibetans, and do not know a single word of Tibetan, are dressed up in Tibetan costumes for the purpose of selling souvenirs and other 'Tibetan' goods to tourists. As one Tibetan comments, 'being a Tibetan is very good for business' (Kolas 2008: 89). There is a complex relationship between local expressions of ethnic difference and the 'taxonomic space' of the ethnic classifications by the state. In Kolas' field research in Shangri-la, for instance, a young woman who first claimed that she was a Tibetan, later revealed that her father was actually a Han and her mother a Naxi, and that she preferred to be a Naxi because 'nobody likes Han people, not even the Han themselves'. In encounters with strangers, ethnicity is often the object of 'games' played with ethnic categories, sometimes involving the deliberate misrepresentation of a person's own ethnic identity (Kolas 2008: 81-82).

Ethnic identities are multivalent and contingent, as they are increasingly exposed to influences from other cultures. Several scholars have argued that minority identities in China are not merely passively accepted or denied by those who are classified but consciously employed in many ways and for different purposes. Identities are being simultaneously negotiated and actively re-created (Kolas & Thowsen 2005: 42). Kolas highlights four different ways of how cultural identity is performative, and open to reconstruction in modern Tibet: to revive the religious life, to preserve and develop the Tibetan written lanugae, to develop new cultural products for the tourist market, and to shape their own modern Tibetan identity (particularly by Tibetan urban youth through popular culture). In Kham region for instance, efforts have been made to revive the significance of the Khampa Arts Festival, hosted by Diqing in 1997. This 'new' (or renewed) Khampa identity is not understood as an ethnic (*minzu*) identity, but rather as a regional identity that bridges current provincial borders. The revived Khampa identity serves mainly to forge ties between Tibetans in Sichuan, Yunnan, and eastern Tibet Autonomous Region. It has not been promoted nor sanctioned by the state as an ethnic identity, but is rather an expression of the revival of economic and political cooperation among Tibetans across the current provincial boundaries (Kolas 2008: 83).

Tibetan diaspora offer another important insight of how Tibetan identity can be constructed differently, as they are mostly living in liberal societies with more freedom to explore their own identities. Houston and Wright study Tibetan dispoaric identities by a focus of large amount of individual voices, and argue that Tibetan diasporic identities are contested, complex, and embedded in not one but multiple narratives of struggle (Houston & Wright 2003: 226-227). Two stories are particularly informing to this discussion. By comparing the Tibetans living in four refugee communities, that is Jawalakhel, Boundhnath, Lazimpat, and Swayombhunath in Kathmandu and Nepal, Houston and Wright's research shows stark class demarcation amongst Tibetans, and refute the conventional notion of Tibetan's community solidarity as espoused by nationalism.

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The second story is about how Tibetans in the US negotiate their identities. After immigrating to the US, and exposed to a liberal multiethnic and multicultural society, diasporic Tibetans there have two main differing responses to their new social environment (Houston and Wright 2003: 228). Some claim that they value their own culture even more so and appreciate a strong ethnic community, when they see so many other ethnic groups are living peacefully with the whites. Others express the sense of freedom because they have moved away from the nationalist conception of a 'pure' Tibetan identity, and life in the US has changed the traditional religious, linguistic, and social practices, and adulterated Buddhist moral and ethical beliefs. All these day-to-day stories show that there are many ways to live a life as a Tibetan, and there are many different stories about Tibetan and Tibet.

Whatever identity and whatever community

There is an inherent contradiction between a community with contingent, fluid, and multi-valent identities, as discussed above, and the current dominant nation-state communities with a national identity. The modern state is historically designed to have a form of belonging that affirms an identity. In his philosophical text, Giorgio Agamben discusses the notion of '*whatever* being' as the foundation of a 'coming community' (Agamben 2003: I). *Whatever* being is whatever singularity, nothing more than its just being-such. Logically, the community of *whatever* singularities is not based on a sharing of properties or identities, but on a sharing nothing more than their singularity, their being-such or their 'whatever-ness' as such (Calarco & DeCaroli 2007: 74). The possibility of the *whatever* itself being taken up without an identity is a threat the state cannot come to terms with. (Agamben 2003: 86). Thus for Agamben, the coming politics is a struggle between the State or Sovereign power, and the non-State, or 'humanity'.

For Agamben, the strategy of drawing lines between forms of life is a sovereign move. And the purpose of this sovereign move by the state is to produce clarity and stability. It is, however, a move that cannot succeed, and that is immediately prone to destabilization, and opens the possibility of change, because of the multitude nature of any community. *Whatever* politics is a politics without distinctions between forms of life. Edkins proposes a number of principle practices for the building of a *whatever* community (Calarco & DeCaroli 2007: 90):

- Acknowledge the impossibility of distinguishing between forms of life;

- Attempt to live with chaos

- Work with negotiation and invention

- Open to the vulnerability and the exposure of being

- Forego the fantasy of an unattainable stabilisation and security.

This conception of a community based on a *whatever* identity, this paper suggests, bears hopes to form a common ground for the resolution of the Tibet Question between China and Tibet.

To sum up, this chapter has shown that personal identities are multivalent and contingent while heavily influenced by social discourses. And they are also immediately performative, and simultaneously negotiated and re-created. In contrast, collective identities are powerful, in that they establish a hegemonic view of both the categorization of people and the delimitation of territories, as we have seen in the case of Tibet and China. Community is never a clear or distinct entity, for it has no fixed or permanent boundaries to distinguish the inside from the outside of the community (Devetak 1995: 45). History is complex, and perhaps infinite. It is often contentious to look for justice by presenting historical narratives, as is witnessed in the decades-long disagreement between Tibet and China. It is thus more fruitful to look into the future for normative solutions that might transform the history and disputes. If, following critical theorists, the identities of a community are, and should be, *whatever* identities, what does this community with *whatever* identities look like? And what institutional invention can possibly lead to the community with *whatever* identities? The next chapter will address these questions.

Chapter 4. Institutional reform for the Tibet Question

'It is time to get over the idea that a state has to express a nation. State should not be in the business of expressing cultural identity' (Butler 2010).

Whatever identity demands a different politics for the community. It thus calls for a different kind of institutional invention that moves beyond the conventional ones that are based on a collective identity. This logically turns the discussion to the interrelations between the state, institution and identity.

4.1 State, institution, and identity

If critical theory is exclusively based on the uniqueness and singularity of the individual, it raises a question: how can societies manage to achieve solidarity within a population with *whatever* identity? In contrast to liberal's multiculturalism based on strong conceptions of individual preference of their culture and strategic choice (Parekh 2002[32]; Laitin 2007), Butler offers a distinctive roadmap towards community solidarity. Based on a subject as a dynamic set of social relations, Butler argues that coalitions do not necessarily form between established and recognizable subjects, and neither do they depend on the brokering of identitarian claims. Instead, mobilizing alliances may well be instigated by criticisms of arbitrary violence, the circumscription of the public sphere, the differential of powers enacted through prevalent nations of 'culture', and the instrumentalization of rights claims for resisting coercion and enfranchisement (Butler 2009: 162). Thus for Butler, solidarity lies in

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[32] Parekh's argument is based a recognition of both plural cultural identities and a shared civic identity, where individual's socially-embedded preference is reconciled.

the common resistance to social injustice and state violence, and the concerted actions based on it, rather than an unsustainable common identity.

The human race is not divided naturally into nations. The state plays a central role in creating national identities not least by building education systems that promote shared values. Hobsbawm claims that there were no nations before nationalism (Hobsbawm 1990). There is very often, if not always, a state action involved in nationalism. Nationalists often use the power of the state to pursue their own Machiavellian visions, particularly in state-led nationalism (Hao 2010: 20). The relations of identity and the state, this paper suggests, deserve more scholarly attentions. Conventionally, the study of national identity was largely focused on the fields of cultural studies, sociology, while the study of state mainly falls into the brackets of world affairs and foreign policy. It was not until fairly recently that one would consider that the two concepts had much to do with each other. Robertson argues that national identities are very manipulable by the state, and the state has been increasing in strength on this matter (Robertson 2008: 65-67).

Despite, or perhaps because of, Globalization, new cultural cleavages and ideological conflicts may be produced rather than shared moral and political beliefs. Globalization works in tandem with the nation-state. In the Yugoslav case, violent nationalism destroyed a multicultural political community when globalization brought about liberal democracy. If the state with its traditional institutions is the causal root of the problematic 'identity', the state is precisely where the changes or challenges should be made. Although it is quite impossible for the world powers to relinquish the nation-states system in the near future, we can nonetheless explore the institutional reform to foster a community in which *whatever* identities may survive and flourish. In what follows, this paper explores some of the possible institutional solutions for the Tibet Question. If there is inherent contradiction between the state and a unitary identity, to what extent is the state able to accommodate the multi-national community through institutional innovation? What forms of *institution* should the state employ to minimize the conflict in multi-national, or *whatever* identities, communities?

For modern state, marginalized ethnic-cultural groups are usually classified into either ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples. Kymlica maintains that rights enjoyed by these two types of people are significantly different: indigenous peoples enjoy the right to be accommodated; ethnic minorities enjoy the rights to be integrated. In Europe and North America, indigenous people mainly refer to those people who had been living in their homelands for centuries before the European colonist came, for instance, Indians in North America, Indigenous Australians, and Maori in New Zealand (Zheng 2010: 14-15). However, the line separating them is never clear cut. Even the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to Naitional or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) eschewed this task of defining these two subjects.

Despite the contested nature of the categorization, there are two prevailing ethics approaches, not mutually exclusive for the state, to the issues of marginalized groups: communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches. Communitarians assert that individuals acquire their most fundamental rights and responsibilities as members of particular communities, not as general members of the human race. Walzer argues that citizenship refers to a web of political rights and duties which only exist when there is a strong sense of identification with the nation-state (Baylis 2009: 554).

Many countries' constitutional design is based on the communitarian approach, which includes the needs of minority groups to acknowledge and protect their culture, religion, language, and education. There are a number of mechanisms to ensure those needs (Zheng 2010: 12):

1. The design of special election mechanisms to make sure that political elites need to get enough votes from minority groups if they want to win in the election.

2. Important decision-making bodies should reserve certain seats for members of minority group.

3. The configuration of national political and administrative powers should comply with the principle of power sharing between majority and minority ethnic groups. Minority groups should have autonomous power to decide on their internal affairs.

4. Right to regional autonomy for a minority ethnic group if they constitute the majority in this region.

Dalai Lama 'Middle Way Approach' is a case in point as an institutional design based on the communitarian approach: 'The Tibetan people do not accept the present status of Tibet under the People's Republic of China. At the same time, they do not seek independence for Tibet, which is a historical fact'. The Middle-Way Approach, the Dalai Lama asserts, is a win-win design[33]. For Tibetans: the protection and preservation of their culture, religion and national identity; for the Chinese: the security and territorial integrity of the motherland; and for neighbours and other third parties: peaceful borders and international relations.

Resistance to doctrines which claim that one race, nation, or gender has the right to dominate another is evident in most parts of the world. Modern nation-states have been challenged by egalitarian ideas which have challenged 'natural' hierarchies between people and groups. Skeptics are quick to stress the continuing appeal of nationalism, the tenacity of the state, and the weakness of cosmopolitan loyalties. Cosmopolitan liberals contend that national democracies have little control over global markets, and a limited ability to influence decisions taken by transnational corporations and international organizations, and propose cosmopolitan democracy, by which the members of different societies come together as cosmopolitan citizens to influence decisions that have global influence (Baylis 2009: 551).

Cosmopolitanism is often adopted by nation-states in a narrower sense. Republican integrationists take up with stimulating and cultivating a 'general will' amongst citizens, who are concerned with the general welfare and common interests of the whole national polity, in order to protect national political process from being eroded by private and partial interests. To achieve national unity, the government needs to unify the national language, carry out civic/patriotic education, and implement egalitarian policies. Secularism or *laïcité* principle in French, and *laiklik* in Turkish constitutional law can be considered in this context (Zheng 2010: 9). In these countries, students in public schools are not allowed to wear religious

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[33] See the official website of the Dalai Lama: http://www.dalailama.com/messages/middle-way-approach (access on 02/02/2012).

symbols when attending classes. The state claims this policy can minimize the possibility of cultural and religious beliefs clashes and conflicts among citizens in the public sphere. In France, several Muslim girls were expelled from public school for wearing a headscarf. In 2004, French legislature enacted a law to forbid wearing 'conspicuous religious symbols' in public schools.

Butler has argued the problematic relationship between the nation and the state. She writes, 'it is time to get over the idea that a state has to express a nation. State should not be in the business of expressing cultural identity' (Butler 2010). Even in liberal society, the choices of national identity in the process of integration, assimilation, and multiculturalism, offered by the liberal state, are not free choices. A comparison of the Tibetans in the PRC with those in diaspora would provide evidence. Hess's study shows that the Tibetan refugees in the US struggle with their nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship (Hess 2006: 91). Much research has shown that new immigrants in liberal societies have to adapt to the new environment by learning the language, applying citizenship for the access of social welfare. All these processes are effectively forms of assimilation, particularly amongst the second (and further) generation immigrants. Zizek makes one of the most blatant criticisms to multiculturalism in liberal society. He argues that identity politics, or multiculturalism, involves patronizing Eurocentrist distance and respect for local cultures without roots in one's own particular culture, and is essentially racism (Butler et al. 2000; 101, 326). Indeed, liberalism underwrites freedom of choice, but only within prescribed limits.

By contrast, the PRC's constitutional design for ethnic minorities is based on Marxism. Marxism resonates with cosmopolitanism. Marx has argued, 'The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country…The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations, into civilization. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeoisie themselves. In one world, it creates a world after its own image.' (Karl Marx, Baylis p552).

The PRC's Marxist cosmopolitan institution is called 'Regional Ethnic Autonomy' (REA), under Article 4 of the PRC constitution. REA is one of the three 'Basic Political Institutions' (*jiben zhengzhi zhidu*) in the PRC (Zheng 2010: 25). On the one hand, the Chinese constitutional prohibition on 'big-nation chauvinism (especially Han Chinese Chauvinism)' and local nationalism (namely, nationalism among minority ethnic people) in China can be considered as an example of Republican integrationist design. On the other hand, the PRC constitution also proclaims to accommodate minority groups and protect their rights. Overall, the nationalities regime outlined in the PRC Constitution is not unique. There are both cosmopolitan and communitarian, or integrationist and accommodationist approaches in the PRC Constitution, that we can easily find in many other liberal states (Table 4.1). However, the PRC vastly fails in practice to live up to these principles.

Accommodation	Integration
Regional autonomy should be practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities; (Article 4)	China is a unitary multi-national state built up jointly by the people of all its nationalities;
In these areas organs of self-government should be established for the exercise of the right of autonomy; (Article 4)	The relationship between China's 56 nationalities is one of 'equality, unity, and mutual assistance';
The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or perform their own ways of life and customs; (Article 4)	To safeguard the solidarity of China's diverse nationalities, it is necessary to 'combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and also necessary to combat local-national chauvinism';
More provisions on the scope and operational rules of the power enjoyed by the autonomous authorities, showing certain characteristics of multiculturalism. (Chapter 3)	Prohibitions on discrimination, oppression, and instigations for secession; (Article 4)
There should be a sufficient number of representatives for the ethnic minorities in China's highest state organ –the national People's Congress (NPC); (Article 59)	A unitary citizenship regardless of nationalities, and equal protection under the law; (Article 33)
	The state 'promote' a common language for all citizens in China, which is 'Putonghua'; (Article 19)

Table 4.1: Comparison of constitutional elements for Ethnic Minorities in the Chinese Constitution.

(Based on Zheng Ge. 2010. "Towards Cultural Autonomy in Tibet")

In the case of the Tibet Question, the institutional solution debate is constantly dominated by either Chinese nationalism (assimilation) or Tibetan nationalism (autonomy) (note – Dalai's mid way is actually close to independence). Hardt and Negri argue, 'the very concept of a liberatory national sovereignty is ambiguous if not completely contradictory'. While this nationalism seeks to liberate the *multitude* from foreign domination; it erects domestic structures of domination that are equally severe (Hardt & Negri 2000: 133). From this point of view, it is clear that neither Chinese nationalism nor Tibetan nationalism would be a good solution to the Tibet Question. The future of Tibet should not fall too easily into a choice between bad alternatives: either submission to China's rule or return to traditional Tibetan social structures; either foreign domination or local domination.

4.2 The future of community building

Few would dispute about the importance of the role that the modern state plays in community building in IR. It is vastly assumed that nation and state is the natural night-watcher of any community. Critical theorists, however, put the existing states-system into scrutiny, and assert that states-system, rather than contribute to the security of human autonomy, is integral to the continual frustration of autonomy and genuine security (Devetak 1995: 38). Amongst them, post-structualists argue that all forms of political community contain the danger of domination or exclusion. Foucault's claim that all forms of knowledge are potentially dangerous, including those that are designed to promote progress, informs poststructuralists' critique. Poststructuralists do not have faith in communitarianism, which often overlooks that the dominant constructions of community exclude marginal groups. It has been argued in Chapter three that there are rights violations within traditional Tibetan society, and the notion of a collective Tibetan identity and culture is unsustainable. Nor do poststructuralists trust cosmopolitan political community. For them, the warning is that the danger of exclusion will remain whether peoples remain loyal to sovereign states or try to build new forms of political community at the regional and global levels. The target of post-structuralism international theory is the traditional conception of community which is tied to notions of totality, boundaries, and identity, all of which are captured in the notion of sovereignty. The philosophical task then consists in undoing sovereignty by questioning the legitimacy of its

closed community, problematizing its boundaries and identity, and thinking what community without sovereignty might mean (Devetak 1995: 44).

Feminists concur that large numbers of women suffer exclusion at the hands of 'their' community. (Baylis p555). They also resonate with the critique of identity and community. Sylvester elaborates a notion of 'homeless homesteading' which is based on the recognition of multiple, hyphenated identities. Rather than presuppose a fixed limit or essence to identity and community, this idea registers the ongoing 'process of identity slippage'. Sylvester particularly argues that this lack of self-sameness makes possible greater empathetic cooperation (Devetak 1995: 46).

Although sovereign states would not disappear overnight, and actually will be the dominant form of community in the foreseeable future, there are changes that can be made to the boundaries of state power. At least some aspects of human life, such as culture, ethnicity, race, citizenship, gender and identities should be subject to debate whether the state has the rule on them. Political communities acquired greater legitimacy by becoming more inclusive, and by giving all citizens the legal, political, and social rights which had previously been monopolized by dominant groups (Baylis 2009: 548). It is time to rethink about the state institutional reform that moves beyond nationalism and multinationalism.

Many scholars, especially Tibetologists, have eagerly anticipated the future institutional invention for the Tibet Question. Few of them argue for a full independence of Tibet from the PRC. Norbu, for example, suggests a design of a Federal Republic of China that has its own Constitution with special autonomous Statehood given to Inner Mongolia, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Ningxia, and Guangxi (Norbu 2001: 351). Norbu's argument essentially premises on the notion of a Tibet as a unitary culture and a common ethnicity. The problematics of a collective identity have been well discussed in the previous chapters. Besides, there are three main pratical problems of this design.

Firstly, it is impossible for the CCP to give up sovereignty over Tibet. There will be territory disputes involved in the federation design, as there are obviously different understandings of Tibetan territory between two parties, and the PRC definitely will not compromise on the TGIE's claim of the extra territories in the provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan. Many scholars have also argued that there is not even such thing as '*de facto* State' under international law (Chiang 2005[34]; Sautman 2010; Chan 2009). Secondly it is an unfair, exclusive, and violent institutional design for Han and other ethnic populations who have been living, or settled down with the local Tibetans. Moreover, it runs the risk of the state power being shifted from the Han elites to Tibetan elites. Lastly, there has been a notable decline in support for Tibet's independence from other state governments since the Dalai Lama started to promote Tibet's sovereignty in the West. It now appears that the disintegration of China, hoped for by the TGIE, is not yet happening. Instead, China has emerged as a regional great power and gained support from the international community for its sovereignty and territory. The US Congress passed a non-binding resolution in 1990 stating 'Tibet is an occupied country' (He & Sautman 2005/2006: 605). It has rarely repeated any more. Even the two traditional allies of Tibet have changed their position. Britain had spoken in terms of China's 'suzerainty' in Tibet since 1906, but now acknowledges the PRC's sovereignty. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee stated that TAR is a part of China in his 2003 visit to China (He & Sauntman 2005/2006: 607). All of the above practical problems would not allow the federation solution to happen.

Many others, by contrast, propose institutional invention within the PRC sovereignty. From an economic development perspective, Wolff proposes a special institutional design of Tibet called 'Mountain coastal' region, or Special Ethnic Trade and Ecological Zone, so that China's Tibet could be transformed from being an embarrassment for China into a regional leader of its neighboring Himalayan states and an efficient portal for China's trans-Himalayan trade with India and other SAARC members (Wolff 2010: xiii). Wolff's design is the epitome of cliché liberal's belief that economic development, by free trade and open market in particular, will be able to transform political cleavages. However, there is little empirical evidence that economic cooperation alone can solve the sovereign issues of Taiwan and Tibet.

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[34] See Chiang, Frank. "Sadly, Taiwan Is Still Not a State" Taipei Times 12 March 2005.

Zhang Ge asserts that the constitutional design of the PRC is theoretically sufficient to accommodate the ethnic minorities, with its intention being to integrate political, administrative, and economic spheres while preserving ethnic identity in the cultural sphere. However, he argues, it in practice fails to provide institutional demarcation of these different spheres. Therefore he proposes to set up a 'Special Cultural Region' to coordinate the cultural administration and policies in Greater Tibet without affecting the normal political and economic functioning of TAR as a territorial unit (Zheng 2010). Although Zhang's argument premises on a collective national identity for a community, its institutional design of the separation of cultural sphere from state sovereignty does provide a promising direction for the solution of the Tibet Question.

 Wang Lixiong, by contrast, suggests a democratic reform, a so-called 'indirect representative system from the bottom', which would reduce Tibetan's motivation for independence while bringing a Greater Tibet autonomy into reality (Sautman 2006: 107-126). Wang is fully aware of the double-edged sword effect of democracy, particularly the Western style democracy that involves public debate and general election. He argues that a system of indirect representation, in which peasants dispersed across a wide area need only elect the village leader, will suit the Tibetan societies where the majority of the people are agricultural and nomadic with low level of literacy and political experience. Furthermore, Wang believes this 'bottom-up' representation can prevent a bad transition of political power, which is simply a change from the Han elites' rule over Tibetans to the Tibetan elites' rule over Tibetans.

Most of the suggested institutional designs premise on the preservation of an essential and exclusive identity of Tibet, which on the outset is bound to be problematic for a community with contingent identities. Nonetheless, they have more or less provided some valuable elements for institutional reform that may move beyond the identity demarcation. This task of the institutional invention for a *whatever* community is extremely difficult and notably it is only at the embryonic stage of developing the idea. Critical theorist Hardt and Negri have proposed a 'three-point solution' for a community that is based on, not 'the people' or 'the

nation', but '*the multitude*', i.e. a *whatever* identity community (Hardt & Negri 2000: 393-413):

- Global citizenship: all should have the full rights of citizenship in the country where they work and live, and to decide if, when, and where to move;

- A social wage and a guaranteed income for *the multitude*, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or occupation, even the unemployed;

- The right to reappropriation: *the multitude* should have free access to and control over knowledge, information, communication, and affects, which guarantee the right to self-control and autonomous self-production.

These basic principles of community building resonate with Butler's political design that a coalition is built by the mass against the violence of the state. In what follows, this research paper constructs a number of principles in the case of Tibet and China by combining critical theorists' vision and the practical schemes of institutional design for Tibet by scholars, in the hope that they will ensure the peaceful coexistence of both the PRC and Tibet, and lead to a fair community building for the *multitude*. These principles are proposed only as a framework for further research, with no detail of the specific functions of the institutional design.

For the PRC, the first and foremost principle should be adopted for the peaceful community building is a genuine democracy. Pei has argued that political reform is far from sufficient for sustainable economic development in PRC (Pei 2006). This lack of political reforms is the core problem in China today, which has led to the rampant official corruption, the erosion of state capacity – 'fragmented authoritarianism', and the growing imbalances in society and polity. Despite the general optimistic views on Chin's rise and the fact that China is still growing, China will have to sooner or later address these inherent problems in its 'developmental autocracy'. Pei envisages one way of breaking the political stagnancy is a "middle-up" reform that might take place in some local, regional level, leading to development divergence. The 'bottom-up' indirect representational democracy, proposed by Wang, is another direction worth exploring for China so that it will not fall into either China's authoritarian rule or wholesale copy of the West democracy (Sautman 2006: 107). Even though no one can be certain how and when China would make this transition, this form of

democratization from the bottom or the local actually is not merely a utopian thought. It will have a major appeal for the 'face'-concerned CCP because of its distinctness from the Western democracy. Democracy achieved by political reform, however, does not imply resolution of the ethnic problems. It is empirically proven that democracy can become a catalyst for the outbreak of ethnic problems[35]. A democratic reform in China has to be complemented by other principles.

Secondly, the PRC needs to rethink about the guiding principle in its ethnic policies. The characterization of ethnic markers and the categorization of ethnic groups were undertaken by ethnologoists working in state-sponsored academic institutions. Some of the most influential construction of ethnic culture has thus taken place in institutions and academies that are carrying out ethnographic research. Ironically, the *minzu* identification project, together with the preferential policies accorded minorities, may have reinforced ethnic identities that were almost forgotten (Kolas & Thowsen 2005: 39). There has been rapid change toward the way the state classifies the population. Today no liberal countries put *race* in any form of ID. In terms of gender identity, the Home Office's Identity and Passport Service (IPS) in the UK , for instance, is considering the reform of the gender options available in the British passport. UK passport holders may be able to opt out of identifying themselves as male or female in the future[36]. For China, it is time to consider how to properly redesign its state ethnicity categorization, either by ceasing of the problematic categorization of ethnicity in the census and all the official ID documents, or by the use of more place-oriented, open, flexible, non-exclusive forms of classification.

Thirdly, the *hukou* (household registration) system in the PRC needs to be reformed to accommodate economic development, and the vastly diverse forms of life in the territory. The regional development disparity is one of the fundamental stimulators for ethnic conflicts, as is discussed in the last chapter. Wang's study shows that the *hukou*-based institutional exclusion in China is one of the main causes for the regional development disparity (Wang 2011: 111-120). This old Qin-Han institutional design has been solidifying and reinforcing the rural-urban and interregional gaps for generations. Wang's study on China's *hukou* system shows

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[35] See Latin's research about the ethnic conflicts in former Soviet Union states after the Cold War (Laitin 1998).
[36] http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/sep/19/home-office-gender-free-passports

that this institutional design has been a key floodgate that is now under increasing strain, and the renovation of it holds the future hopes and hypes about narrowing the regional disparity of development and redistribution. Perhaps combining Wang's observation with Hardt & Negri's vision, the PRC needs to seriously consider demolishing this institutional exclusion of the obsolete *hukou* system, and creating a uniform *hukou* category, which will enable all citizens to have freedom to migrate, work, and live wherever they are economically settled and culturally attached to. Ethnicity and *Hukou* status should not be the business of the state. Instead, the state can focus more on economic indicators, such as household income and GDP per capita, and use economic methods, such as taxation and subsidies, to tackle the problems of migration, regional disparity, and imbalanced distribution of resources and wealth. This institutional reform can possibly kill two birds with one stone, solving both the urban-rural disparity and the ethnic conflicts.

Fourthly, in the long run, the PRC needs to consider the separation of the cultural sphere from the political and economic sphere, and the embracement of the civil society to deal with citizens' cultural life. Since every national identity that builds on a founding myth and a common history/culture is necessarily a hegemonic construction, the nation-state form of community functions inherently through the exclusion of some marginal groups. As the case of Tibet has shown, individuals are the producers of culture. The cultural sphere should be returned and open to the realm of individuals and civil society, rather than served as an ideology of the state. In the short term, The PRC needs to address the issue of the Han chauvinism trumping the ethnic policies endorsed by the Constitution, as Zheng's study suggests (Zheng 2010). In the long run, however, the PRC might need to consider a constitutional demarcation between cultural sphere and the state politics in order to achieve a thorough cultural autonomy for any ethnicity or minority. Perhaps even more importantly, China has to learn to uphold the 'rule of the law', developing an independent local judiciary system with full responsibility for interpreting local laws.

For Tibet, in contrast, there are changes to be made as well. Firstly, Tibet authority, i.e. the TGIE, should be strategic with use of the problematic national identity and territory claim. The discursive and contested construction of the Tibetan (and Chinese) national identity has

demonstrated that there is nothing essential about the identity in struggle. The White and the Black, the West and the Orient, the Chinese and the Tibetan, are all representations that function only in relation to each other. Despite appearances, ethnic / national identity has no real necessary basis in nature, biology, culture, or rationality (Hardt & Negri 2000: 129). The Tibetan nationalist movement has certainly some progressive characteristics vis-à-vis the Chinese autocratic state, just as the Chinese had in its de-colonization over 60 years ago. The progressive functions of national sovereignty, however, are always accompanied by powerful structures of internal domination and inevitable antagonism of external exclusion. To counter the political hegemony of the CCP, an 'eye for eye' strategy, one of inversion of the hegemon's logic itself, is not the only possible option for Tibet. At a practical level, many scholars have pointed to the cost of Tibet's national independence, comparable to the disasters in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Sautman 2010: 142).

Secondly, the future of the political structure of the TGIE deserves a serious and on-going reflection by the authority. A political reform for the post-Dalai Lama era should be one of the top agendas for the TGIE too, as the current Dalai Lama is approaching his 80's. A democratized government is one of the main thrusts by the Tibetan authority against the PRC's rule. However, the powerful role of the religion, i.e. the Dalai Lama, is clearly questionable for a true democracy. The TGIE democracy is heavily tinted by the overriding power of the Dalai Lama, who gave instructions for direct elections and an increase in parliament's power (Sautman 2005/2006: 622). The future of a truly democratic Tibet should not be hinged on a religious leader, or the *Tulkus* (the next reincarnated Dalai Lama), but a genuine democratic system.

Thirdly, Tibet needs to address the internal problems of the violation of the rights towards other marginal groups. Although Tibetans are generally perceived as an oppressed minority group in China, the story in reality is not simply black or white. On the one hand, there are human rights issues within the group. Tibetan women in general are treated inferior in the social hierarchy. As the nationalist movement dominates the political agenda, the advocacy for Tibetan women's rights has been vastly ignored, for instance in the case of the work by The Tibetan Women's Association. On the other hand, it is equally easy to dismiss by

commentators that some Tibetan elites have become the discriminator against other marginal groups, as in the case of the urban Tibetans calling the rural Han as 'Han trash' (Hu & Salazar 2008: 15). The Tibetan authority needs to face these diverse problems within the territory and address them sooner rather than later. With the fast development of information technology, people will know exactly what happens rather than merely follow the black-and-white state propaganda. As people move and cultures hybridize, people living in the Tibetan territory are vastly diverse. The future of this land called 'Tibet' lies in the solidarity by all the people, with whatever nationality, whatever gender, whatever religious belief, urban or rural, to form coalition to fight for their principle rights against the violence and injustice of the one-party state.

In summary, this chapter has explored the possible institutional reform for the peaceful resolution of the Tibet Question. The chapter argues that neither Chinese nationalism nor Tibetan nationalism would be a solution to the Tibet Question, and that the future of the community building for Tibet and China cannot be based on a common identity of a nation, which at once homogenizes internally and excludes externally. Rather, this chapter argues for an alternative approach to community building that respects the *multitude* with contingent identities, and proposes a number of guiding principles of institutional reform for the future community building for Tibet and China.

Conclusion and discussion

In the light of the above discussions, this paper concludes that the collective identity of Tibet and China is a highly contested and hegemonic construction; therefore it is never sustainable and justifiable for community building. Tibet, as well as China, should look beyond identity/culture identity and search for an alternative approach to nation/state building without succumbing to either Chinese nationalism or Tibetan nationalism. This research paper proposes that the future community building in Tibet is dependent on the institutional reform that is based on open and inclusive identities, i.e. the recognition of the singularity of the *multitude*. The fervent use of the term 'identity' and the appeals of nationalism are no doubt going to continue in the public discourse, in China or Tibet. The future of Tibet would remain debatable in decades to come as well. Nonetheless, this paper draws attention to the ways in which critical international theory may valuably inform the discussion of the Tibet Question:

Firstly, this paper calls for the problematization of the identity of 'Tibet', and the careful, and perhaps strategic, use of the term 'identity' [37]. The study in this research indicates that identitarain essentialism is still ubiquitous today. Who are the Tibetans? It should be clear now that Tibetan culture and Tibetan identities are not established entities that are available for us to re-discover, or to defend against the others. Whereas social science and anthropology have used the term 'culture' as something contested or invented, rather than shared or 'public'; International Relations remains a conservative discipline on the conceptual clarity of the term. The argument of 'the clash of civilization' by Huntington is more dangerous than helpful. The notion of ethnic conflicts, framed by Tibet and China, and tacitly reinforced by mainstream IR scholarship, misses the nature of political struggles in today's China. The Han, as such, are not the hindrance of Tibetans' liberation. The Han-Tibet cleavage masks the

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[37] How should we talk about *identity* without reification, just as to talk about *race* without racism? A debate between feminists is particularly inspiring at this point. How are feminists supposed to discuss woman if the mere utterance of the subject might risk being an essentailist? Spivak suggests that feminists need to rely on an 'operational essentialism', and use the term women for 'strategic purposes' Strategy here implies 'persistent critique' for Spivak (Spivak 1990: 325).

deeper root of all the social tensions (human rights, development, freedom), i.e. the CCP party state. Political solidarity would be stronger if all citizens, with whatever nationality, whatever gender, whatever religious belief, urban or rural, unite and form coalition to fight for their principle rights against the violence and injustice of the one-party state.

Secondly, this paper emphasizes the importance of *relationality* rather than identity in the discussion of the Tibet Question. Although the dialogue between the Dalai Lama (or representatives) and the PRC has been on going since 2002, there has been little progress achieved because of the enormous cognitive gaps between the Tibetan exile and the PRC. Tibet and China should both be open to mutual influences from each other's cultures and traditions. Assimilation, in itself and of itself, is never one way or necessarily harmful. Tibet can embrace the modernization brought about by the PRC and the West, if the PRC could be more relaxed about the expression of cultural identities by the ordinary Tibetans. As He and Sautman puts it, patience is the key to progress, as it is impossible to remove fifty years of distrust through a few visits (He & Sautman 2005/2006: 624).

Last but not the least, this paper suggests that both the PRC and Tibet should look forward, rather than backward, to the future of the peaceful resolution of the Tibet Question. There is not much point dwelling on the complex and contested narratives of history for both parties, especially Tibet, if identity/culture is only a myth. The future of Tibet and China is what they make of it. The historical opportunity has come, considering China has become a regional great power with economic success. China should put political reform as a top priority, particularly loosening the institutional classification and control over the populations. Right at the moment of writing this conclusion, the CCP has issued a guideline that 'proposes creating a unified household registration system', as well as 'granting equal access to public services' (employment assistance, compulsory education, and occupational training) for rural residents[38]. A democratic China would surely vindicate its bad 'identity' of communist autocracy, which is one of the fundamental causes for Tibet, Taiwan, and any other sovereign disputes. Moreover, China should genuinely take care of the issues of regional disparity and distribution imbalance, which have caused full-blown social unrests and protests. Rather than

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[38] "China to guarantee migrants access to public services" on http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-02/23/c_131427981.htm (23/02/2012, access on 23/02/2012).

spending billions of dollars on Olympics and a Space Project, China should seriously re-direct the resources to the poor and the marginalised to live up to its recent strategy of constructing a 'harmonious society'[39] under the leadership of *Hu Jintao* and the upcoming *Xi Jinping*.

The conclusion made means not just an end of this research paper, but a prospect for further research based on the result of the evaluation. Like any research, there are obviously limitations in this research. Above all there is no field research and not much quantitative study involved, partly because of the uncertain credibility of the available data on Tibet, but primarily because of the time and resources constraint of this program. A future project that is supported by first-hand surveys and visits would secure a stronger argument. Secondly, the discourse analysis on Tibetan identities by employing the content and contestation framework (chapter 3) is largely theoretical supported by short case studies. Furthermore, the analysis of the discursive construction of Tibetan identity is largely descriptive rather than definitive, precisely because of the contingent and fluid nature of 'identity'. However, some quantitative supplement would have been useful if resources permitted. Finally, the answer to the institutional reform for Tibet with a critical approach (chapter 4) remains vague, as the whole idea is still at the developing stage. And this area may warrant further research in the future.

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[39] The concept of "harmonious socialist society" was first launched at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and further interpreted by Chinese President Hu Jintao at a routine high-level Party seminar held prior to the sessions of NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 2005 to set the keynote of the social and economic development. See website: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/92169/92211/6274601.html (access on 02/02/2012).

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