The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama, by Melvyn C. Goldstein, University of California Press, 1997, US$ 24.95

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The political status of Tibet in relation to China has been a contentious issue. It has invoked the question of the right of a people to self-determination. Melvyn C. Goldstein's book titled *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* presents an expounded historical account of the cultural as well as political survival of Tibet from a Western, primarily American, lens. The book's essential objective is to define the boundaries of what he refers to as the 'Tibet Question' and analyse Chinese Tibetan policies in the light of the relationship shared with the US. The 'Tibet Question', a nationalist issue at its core, here symbolises the struggle to control territory and the representations of history and current events. A difference is drawn between political Tibet and ethnographic Tibet, the former refers to the territories ruled by the Dalai Lamas continuously from the earliest times to modern times and the latter refers to the neighbouring areas where people of Tibetan ethnicity reside but political Tibet exercised its jurisdiction only at irregular intervals.

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As Tibet unified under King Songtsen Gampo's leadership in the 7th century CE, political communication between Tibet and China began. This dynasty lasted for two centuries and expanded its borders northward, westward and southward. In the 8th century CE, the contemporary Tang dynasty's capital was captured by Tibet when they stopped receiving tribute. By the early 9th century CE, borders were agreed upon by the two kingdoms after signing formal treaties. It was evident that both were distinct political entities. In the imperial era, Tibet flourished with a sophisticated civilisation—a written language developed and Buddhism was introduced. The first monastery was built in 779 CE. There was notable opposition to it by followers of the Bon religion. Eventually, this led to the disintegration of the dynasty as the pro-Bon king was assassinated by a Buddhist monk in the mid-19th century CE angered by Buddhist persecution. The fragmentation that followed had repercussions on the survival of Buddhism in central Tibet too. It was not until the 11th century CE that Indian Buddhist monks sparked a revival. Meanwhile, the Tang dynasty fell and China underwent a period of disunification—known as the era of Five Kingdoms. During this time, there is no record of Sino-Tibetan relations presumably because of the formation of buffer states between them (pp. 1–2).

In the 13th century CE, under Genghis Khan various Mongol tribes joined hands and began unprecedented expansionist conquests. Tibet paid tribute to the Mongols and was not invaded. After his death, Tibet ceased paying tribute and his successor, Godan, summoned a leader of the Sakya sect of Buddhism. Here began the "priest–patron" relationship, in the 14th century CE, after Sakya rule was overthrown and Sino-Tibet relationship continued in some form with the Ming dynasty (pp. 2–4).

In the 17th century, after severe internal strife and power shifts, the Geluk sect rose with the help of Mongol leader Gushri Khan and came to be referred to as the "Yellow Hat" government. They held diplomatic relations with their contemporary Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty. Over time, Tibet fell under Qing hegemony till the British entered as the neighbouring Himalayan regions came under its influence. In the late 19th century CE, the British sent the Macaulay mission, which led to the delineation of Tibet's border with Sikkim (a British protectorate) and later even trade treaties. However, Tibet declined to assist in the implementation of these accords since it was not a party to them. Realising that China could not influence developments in Tibet, the British sought to establish direct relations and communication with Lhasa. The 13th Dalai Lama did not intend to have relations with the British. Hence, bloodshed ensued and eventually, the

British entered Lhasa, the first Westerners to conquer Tibet. The Dalai Lama went into exile in Mongolia, hoping to garner support from the Czar. The Anglo-Tibetan accord was signed and later modified by the Anglo-Chinese accord. The first was signed without Chinese presence and the second was signed without Tibetan presence. This was internationalised by the signing of the Anglo-Russian accord, which maintained that Britain and Russia would not engage in negotiations with Tibet without China as an intermediary (pp. 5–28).

China wanted real control over Tibet as it did not have direct command and it seemed that Tibet would be subsumed by China, but the Qing empire was overthrown in 1911 after facing defeat in the war with Japan and losing Taiwan and southern Manchuria; and anti-Western Boxer Uprising. While the Chinese army occupied Tibet during this time the Dalai Lama, living in exile in Darjeeling, organised a military force with the help of Nepalese mediation and succeeded in expelling all Chinese troops from Tibet and victoriously returned to Lhasa. The new Chinese government had nationalistic goals and propagated that the "non-Chinese" territories under some form of subjugation, including Tibet, during the time of the Qing dynasty were part of the new republic. A five-coloured flag was created, black representing Tibet. Here, the author refers to the "Tibet Question" in its modern form (pp. 28–31).

The British now wanted Tibet to act as a buffer state because of their bad experience with China so they pressured the new government to negotiate in Simla. While the Tibetans proclaimed that Tibet is and has always been an independent state, their Chinese counterparts stated that Tibet is an integral part of China. Britain did not want to jeopardise their trade interest in China and Hong Kong so it proposed that Tibet would be autonomous from China but also acknowledged Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. For Tibet, this compromise was not ideal but acceptable because it guaranteed complete control over its affairs. However, no agreement could be reached over drawing boundaries between political Tibet and ethnographic Tibet. The Chinese government repudiated the final border and refused to ratify the Simla Convention. The British representative, Henry McMahon, signed a bilateral note with Tibet that bound each side to uphold the terms of the unsigned convention (pp. 30–34).

In 1949, Mao Zedong inaugurated the People's Republic of China whose goal was to liberate regions like Tibet. However, once India gained independence in 1947, Britain no longer had an interest in maintaining Tibet's autonomy. Therefore, appeals by Tibet to Britain and the USA went

unanswered despite the Cold War narrative against communism. Although Mao had enough military power, fearing guerilla tactics and potential international intervention, he opted to liberate Tibet "peacefully". Military action was used to bring Tibet to the negotiating table as seen in the invasion of Chamdo. His desire to obtain political settlement was approved by the Dalai Lama—acceptance of Chinese sovereignty and gradual reform in Tibet's feudal economy (pp. 37–45).

When the issue was raised in the United Nations by El Salvador, Britain and the newly formed India recommended that it not be considered. Tibet, now isolated, sent a negotiating delegation to Beijing in 1951 and reluctantly signed the Seventeen Point Agreement. This marked the first formal acknowledgement of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in the-then 1,300 years of recorded history. In exchange for this concession, China agreed to maintain the Dalai Lama and the traditional political-economic system intact until the Tibetans wanted reforms. The 14th Dalai Lama and his advisors were shocked at hearing the news of the signing of the agreement as the Tibetan negotiating delegation thought it best to not send each item for discussion and tried to cut the best deal possible knowing that the Dalai Lama could always refuse to accept it. While one faction advocated denouncing the agreement and fleeing into exile, the other faction advocated return to Lhasa and abiding by the terms of the agreement. Given the Cold War context, they were also persuaded by the US to choose the former option. However, American support rang hollow as there was no indication of supporting Tibet as a nation independent of China. Eventually, the Dalai Lama indicated his formal acceptance of the agreement via a telegram (pp. 46–52).

Between 1951 and 1959, a policy of moderation and gradualism was followed. However, it faced backlash within the Communist Party. Moreover, the situation was different in ethnographic Tibet which did not come under the agreement. There, reforms were brought with full force leading to a bloody rebellion that spilled over to political Tibet. The refugees that came to political Tibet from ethnographic Tibet became a major factor in the 1959 uprising in Lhasa. According to the author, while the Dalai Lama wanted to reach an operational compromise with China, the anti-Chinese sentiment was too strong for him to contain.

Many believed that because they were forced into the agreement through military action, they were not bound by its terms. While Chinese hardliners were pushing for a "socialist transformation", Tibetan hardliners were in league with the refugees. Mao made one last attempt by reducing the number of Han cadres and stating that reforms would not be implemented for at

least six years. However, the unrest could not be quelled and an uprising broke out resulting in the Dalai Lama's exile to India via Arunachal Pradesh to Dharamshala. Meanwhile, China too renounced the agreement and terminated the traditional government in Tibet. It ended Tibet's special status, confiscated estates, closed down monasteries and created new Communist governmental structures (pp. 52–56).

After 1959, both Tibet and China competed to legitimise their versions of history and current events. The issue was raised twice in the UN by Tibet with the help of the US. By the late 1960s hope for further support subsided as President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger moved to establish rapprochement with China. The Tibet Question was no longer aligned with American national interests. In fact, it was potentially harmful (pp. 57–58).

Religious persecution was going on in Tibet. The death of Mao in 1976 produced major changes in China that included a new cultural and economic ideology. Informal talks took place in Hong Kong in 1978 between representatives of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's brother. Consequently, the Dalai Lama sent fact-finding delegations to China. The first secretary of the Communist Party in Tibet had been reporting to Beijing that political conditions in Tibet were excellent and the people strongly supported the ideals of the Communist Party. However, when the delegations visited Lhasa, it received a tumultuous welcome and anti-China sloganeering. Thus, contrary to what the Chinese had expected, these visits revealed to the exiles that Chinese proclamations of socialist progress in Tibet had little substance. The living standard of the Tibetan people was poor, economic development minimal, and the destruction of religion and monasticism almost total. They also revealed that the Tibetan masses still had strong feelings of Tibetan nationalism. After some internal deliberation releasing the liberal six-point reform programme for Tibet signified a departure from the hardline assimilation policy of the Cultural Revolution and a return to the more ethnically sensitive strategy of the 1950s (pp. 60–63).

In 1982, a negotiating delegation was sent to Beijing by the Dalai Lama. Tibet was now under the physical control of a powerful China, which Tibetans could not defeat on the battlefield. Complicating this was the future status of "ethnographic Tibet"; the exile government was deeply committed to the re-creation of a "Greater" Tibet, which would include in one administrative unit both political and ethnographic Tibet. The Dalai Lama had worked hard since 1959 to meld the disparate refugees into a unified community by including Tibetans from ethnographic Tibet as equals in the exile

government. The visits of their fact-finding delegations had revealed that the majority of the people of Tibet were behind the Dalai Lama, so they felt they brought a powerful chip to the bargaining table—the Tibetan people's loyalty. In the end, therefore, there was no consensus in Dharamshala as to political and territorial concessions, and there was pressure not to create one for the negotiations in Beijing. The discussions, therefore, did not get down to substantive issues concerning the terms of the Dalai Lama's return. A statement is said to have been made in passing that if China was willing to offer Taiwan the "one country-two systems" option, Tibet should receive far more. A second face-to-face meeting between Tibetan representatives and China was held in Beijing in 1984. At this meeting, the Tibetans came up with a developed negotiating position that included the creation of a demilitarised Greater Tibet with complete internal political autonomy. Dharamshala's leaders had misjudged both, their leverage as well as Beijing's desire for an agreement. This meeting, too, bore no fruit (pp. 69–74).

The Dalai Lama made a five-point proposal as part of the international campaigning which included transforming Tibet into a "Zone of Peace"; reversing the population transfer policy; human rights and democratic freedom; protecting the environment; and beginning negotiations on the future status of Tibet. In 1987, a riot broke out in Lhasa following a political demonstration. In 1988, some monks were released and reparations were given to three monasteries in Lhasa. However, during the Great Prayer Festival following that, in which the Panchen Lama (Tibet's number-two incarnation) made attempts at reconciliation, a bigger second riot broke out. The year 1989 brought another dramatic setback for Beijing when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The Tiananmen debacle also took place in the same year. Beijing reacted predictably to the threat this shift in momentum posed by moving to a more hard-line, integrationist policy. The new policy operated under the assumption that it was unrealistic to expect the Dalai Lama to play a constructive role in Tibet. A key component of the "economic integration" approach is the freedom of non-Tibetans to do business in Tibet. These non-Tibetans were part of a phenomenon common throughout China called the "floating population", which dramatically changed the demographic composition of Tibet. The number of these non-Tibetans is unprecedented in Tibetan history and has turned Lhasa, the political heart of Tibet, into a city where non-Tibetan residents appear to equal or exceed the number of actual Tibetans. Beijing's reluctance to terminate this influx was also strategically motivated. The large numbers of non-Tibetans living and working in Tibet provided a new and formidable

pro-China "constituency". A major debacle over the selection of a new Panchen Lama also ensued (pp. 77–129).

Overall, this book provides rich information on the anthropological historiography of Tibet with a focus on roles played by individuals. It also forces the reader to confront questions on the feudal system prevalent in Tibet which is often overlooked in the context of Tibetan freedom movement and Chinese oppression. The details of internal disagreements on both sides—Chinese as well as Tibetan—give tremendous insights. The author also seems to be sceptical of Western double standards shown by Britain and the US throughout Tibetan history. The role of the US and in particular the Central Investigative Agency is highlighted. For the author, territorial control is central to what he calls the "Tibet Question" while issues such as human rights are treated as secondary. I take a different position, as his argument presumes that the conflict would persist with similar intensity even in the absence of human rights and cultural violations. In contrast, I contend that these violations are fundamental to the dispute. The book also omits critical information regarding the role played and the repercussions faced by India. Key developments such as the signing of the Panchsheel agreement; disputed borders; Dalai Lama's and the Tibetan Parliament in exile as well as refugees' status in India; and the 1962 Sino-Indian war are notably absent. Another overlooked aspect is the impact of the "Great Leap Famine". For future scholarship, it would be both timely and relevant to explore the intersection of climate and politics in the Tibetan context.