

Abandoning Tibet -A Dangerous Precedent

In agreeing that Tibet is Chinese territory Obama consigns the Tibetan people to a dangerous and uncertain fate as a so-called *ethnic minority* under the mercy of a totalitarian regime's bloody maw. The much cherished tradition of the United States in upholding the political and fundamental human rights of peoples facing oppression is in the jeopardy of being shamefully broken.

Such an act of betrayal by the United States, widely respected as the 'champion for freedom and democracy' in the world, has perhaps set into motion a dangerous trend which could witness the further erosion of existing international support for Tibet. This although not entirely emphatic, is arguably an important leverage upon the communist Chinese regime. Observing the President of the world's most influential and powerful nation agreeing to Chinese demands on its supposed sovereignty over Tibet could result in other heads-of-state following suit with similar acts of appeasement. This would be very welcome progress indeed for Beijing which has been seeking international support for its bogus claims over Tibet.

It would also assist China's determination to eliminate Tibetan national identity, and invest a troubling legitimacy to the lie that China was politically and legally justified in its annexation of Tibet. Although meeting present political and commercial needs regarding US-Chinese relations in acknowledging Chinese authority over Tibet, President Obama's comments could also seriously undermine future options in terms of any human rights dialogue with China. Future US concerns and criticisms on the human rights situations inside Tibet and China can now be more effectively and authoritatively dismissed and evaded by Beijing as a domestic concern of China. US has given Beijing the leverage to argue even more forcefully, any criticisms concerning the issue of Tibet as an infringement of China's national sovereignty, which the Presidential Administration has publicly recognized.

By complying with, and endorsing, Beijing's lies on Tibet, the United States has been left in a more exposed and vulnerable position in its ability to champion human and cultural rights. Formidable, though such implications are for Tibet, the articulation that the United States recognizes Chinese rule over Tibet, was a public affirmation of a policy on Tibet which has defined and sustained political relations between Washington and Beijing. While there was an understandable sense of disillusionment, and feeling of abandonment, the potential isolation and erosion of the Tibetan cause as a political issue the future status is not dependent upon the utterances of the American President, no matter how influential or significant the position of the United States.

The Illusions of Autonomy

Tibet's future though hostage to political and economic developments inside Communist China also remains in the courageous and determined will of the Tibetan people. After fifty-nine years of suffering under the most violent and oppressive regime and bearing the direct brunt of cultural assault and aggressive colonization, Tibetans inside Tibet robustly maintain an inspiring resistance to Chinese occupation. Their loyalty and devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama is inspirational, as is their sacrifice and patriotism in challenging the military-might of Communist China. It is important to understand that the political aspirations of the Tibetan people is not for any form of autonomy, which after decades of Chinese rule Tibetans know provides no protection of their political, civil and religious freedom.

As a proposed solution for the question of Tibet autonomy offers no conclusive or succinct legal definition, as it describes a number of political structure and arrangements. However its various forms do share one troubling feature. Any 'rights', granted to a minority group by the dominant power, are dictated by that authority; and more worryingly, in terms of guaranteeing and protecting Tibetan culture, can be removed by that same power. Tibetans sorely recall that Communist China has extended so-called autonomy to Tibet previously in 1951, at the time of the so-called 17 Point Peace Agreement which was signed under duress.

Almost six decades of brutal suppression inside Tibet have given Tibetans enough reasons to believe that any form of meaningful autonomy cannot be practiced and is not achievable under Communist China.

Yet despite the forced labor camps, systemic torture, corrosive colonization, forced settlements of nomads, coercive birth control, the spirit of Tibetan resistance is burning stronger than ever. As witnessed during the mass demonstrations of 2008 the demand for Tibet's just and historic independence has not been crushed, Tibetans are engaged in a struggle not for autonomy, or for improved economic or religious freedoms only, none of which will extend any protection of Tibet's culture of national identity, but for national liberation.

Tibetans understand all too well that China's objectives are more ominous - a '*Final Solution*' to assimilate Tibet and remove any inkling of Tibetan national identity. In the face of a 'life and death' situation, the just struggles of the Tibetans for an Independent Tibet deserve concrete support of world leaders and freedom loving people across the globe.

It is a great sadness that President Barack Obama could not, even in some small way, have voiced his support for that rightful endeavour.

RTYC Minnesota strongly urges President Barack Obama to seriously reconsider his diplomacy on Tibet and lend his over powering message of hope and change to the Tibetan struggle.

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