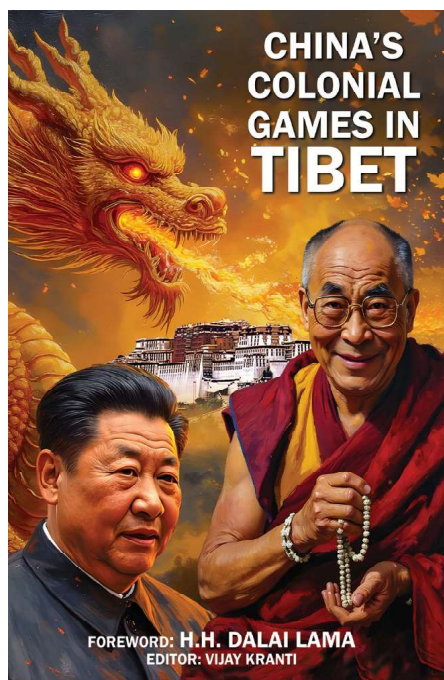


Review Article 2

China's Colonial Games in Tibet

Vijay Kranti (Editor)



Introduction

There are books that tell a story, reminding us of what former United States President Thomas Jefferson once said, “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty”.

The book, *China's Colonial Games in Tibet*, published by V K Media Group, New Delhi, for the Centre for Himalayan Asia Studies and Engagement, is compiled and edited by Vijay Kranti, a renowned journalist, photographer, Tibetologist, and veteran expert on China. It represents the first significant attempt by any China-focused institution to bring together, on a single platform, a distinguished group of scholars and domain experts on Tibet and China. In contemporary times, it is the only work that truly captures

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the spirit of the excerpt above. It is an exhaustive study of the contemporary situation in Tibet, which China has been assiduously hiding from the rest of the world. Hard-bound and running to approximately 486 pages, the book covers 12 sections on China's colonial practices in occupied Tibet with 60 essays by 39 well-known experts on Tibet and China across the world. The book has been compiled to provide comprehensive information to scholars, researchers, diplomats, policymakers, opinion-makers and students of defence studies, strategy, and security. The editor has successfully woven together contributions from academics, diplomats, journalists, and Tibetan activists into a coherent volume.

Given the Chinese government's absolute blockade on independent reporting, the book stands out as an exclusive work highlighting the systematic extinction of the indigenous population of Tibet by the Communist Party of China (CPC) through cultural genocide and severe environmental destruction beyond public consciousness. Unleashed by various organs of the state, particularly the United Front Work Department and the Public Security Bureau, an omnipresent secret organ of the CPC in China-Occupied Colonies (COC) like Tibet, East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Southern Mongolia (Inner Mongolia), Manchuria (Northeast China), Macau, and Hong Kong, the book is a clarion call for the world to stand up unitedly and resist the same, to say the least.

It is one of the paradoxes of contemporary international politics that Tibet, despite possessing many of the attributes traditionally associated with statehood—including its own flag, currency, passport, language, script, religion, a well-defined territory comprising the regions of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham, a postal system, and diplomatic relations with several countries—continues to remain a COC. During the period from 1912 to 1951, Tibet functioned in many respects as an independent state and met several of the criteria outlined in Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the rights and duties of states. Yet, it remains what some scholars describe as a COC. The experts featured in the opening section of this volume argue that these COCs may achieve genuine autonomy, separation, or freedom only in the event of a fundamental transformation or collapse of the CPC's rule.

Post the coerced signing of the 17-Point Agreement of 1951, China has systematically dismantled Tibet's way of life and silenced influential Tibetans, resulting in massive uprisings. These have

further triggered Chinese crackdowns. The CPC has been ruling Tibet with an iron fist under heavy surveillance and pre-emptive suppression of any form of dissent, and continues to accelerate efforts to erode Tibetan culture, language, and identity through repressive policies. An immediate consequence is the use by of the term 'Xizang' instead of Tibet by China's official media. It may be recalled that, in 1965, China reorganised and redefined the geographical boundaries of Tibet. The regions of Kham and Amdo, which together constituted nearly two-thirds of historical Tibet, were divided into several parts and merged with the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai. The remaining one-third of historical Tibet, comprising the region of U-Tsang, was designated as the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The focused policy of 'Sinicisation' aimed at eliminating Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule through cultural uniformity and enforced homogenisation is illustrated through the CPC's policy of weaponising education as a tool to control the Tibetan mind. It was aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity, its way of life, religion, and linguistic heritage, and promoting a unified ethnic identity, especially after the 2008 Tibetan uprising against the treatment and persecution of Tibetans.

In the above backdrop, His Holiness (HH) the Dalai Lama faces a complex matrix of challenges, the central issue being the contested question of HH's succession. As a feasible way forward, HH's promotion of democratic reform within the Tibetan polity in exile represents a transformative departure from the theocratic traditions of historical Tibet towards a participatory leadership. In his foreword to the book, HH the Dalai Lama clearly states, in the context of his 'Middle Way Approach' since 1974, that he seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet, referring to Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's assurance to his personal emissary in 1979 that "Except for the independence of Tibet, all other questions can be discussed".

While the book brings out with total clarity that a person appointed by the CPC can never be the real Dalai Lama, China's new law 'Order-5' indicates that the official position of China on the subject will continue to govern. The book, therefore, points to a potential conflict of interest among the various stakeholders. This assumes greater significance in light of the fact that the US

Congress has unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution (HR 4331), which was subsequently signed into law by the US President, prohibiting any attempt by China to interfere in or determine the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

The book also brings out the abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gendhun Choekyi Nyima, by the Chinese authorities at the age of six, along with his family, three days after 14 May 1995, when he was officially recognised by HH as the true incarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama and as a future spiritual leader. He and his family continue to be kept out of public view by the Chinese Government. China staged a controlled lottery and appointed Gyaltzen Norbu, a political figure, as their 11th Panchen Lama. The disappearance of Gendhun Choekyi Nyima has prevented him from fulfilling his greatest responsibility, recognising the next Dalai Lama. Further, China has made clear its intention to use the Panchen Lama's institution to manipulate the future succession of the Dalai Lama, as the CPC perceives key leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, such as the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama, as threats.

Resistance to the above steps, taken by the Chinese government, highlights that despite being under tremendous suffering, interrogation, and surveillance, Tibetans have not given up their hope and struggle for freedom. It also underpins the fact that the 169 self-immolations by Tibetans, both inside and outside Chinese borders, have gone almost unnoticed and uncontested by various world governments, international bodies, and the media, while a single self-immolation by a Buddhist monk in Vietnam in 1963 contributed to events that ultimately led to the defeat and unceremonious departure of the American Army from Vietnam. The section also reinforces that the enormity of the tragedy in Tibet appears to be ignored by the world. At the same time, the self-immolation of a street vendor in Tunisia in 2010 triggered an unprecedented 'Arab Spring' across 19 Arab countries and led to the downfall of seven heads of state. The book, highlighting the cultural genocide waged by the CPC in Tibet to wipe out the entire population through slow, incremental, systematic, and unrelenting oppression, has underscored the global indifference and silence towards these Tibetan immolations.

The book also covers China's colonial policies affecting the Tibetan environment, their implications for Asia and the world, and the need to confront China on these issues. It brings out discussion on the changing climate in Tibet, which deserves urgent global attention, among other issues. The most controversial aspect of the Chinese brutalities has been the weaponisation of the CPC's 'Zero COVID' policy, the state-sponsored human organ harvesting, and deoxyribonucleic acid profiling in Tibet towards the fulfilment of its larger objective of Sinicisation.

Further, the book also highlights the paradox regarding systematic cultural genocide in Tibet, while the West is becoming an accomplice to it due to fears of economic retaliation from China. The contributors argue that the Chinese government's policies of systematic persecution of Tibetans began in earnest in the mid-1990s, with the forced relocation of entire populations and the establishment of re-education camps. The mass relocation of natives, displacement of Tibetan nomads by Mandarin Chinese, forcible separation of Tibetan children from their families into state-run boarding schools designed to assimilate them into Han Chinese culture, forced abortions and sterilisation of Tibetan women, forced marriages of Tibetan girls to Han Chinese men, and Xi Jinping's call for the establishment of 'Tibetan Buddhism with Chinese socialist characteristics' have not only empowered the authorities to target all publicly visible Tibetan symbols but have also unleashed a new Taliban-like face in Tibet.

China's Colonial Games in Tibet is more than just a collection of essays on Tibet. It is a comprehensive examination of the political, cultural, religious, environmental, and strategic dimensions of the Tibetan question under Chinese rule. By bringing together a distinguished group of scholars, diplomats, journalists, and Tibetan voices, the editor has created a volume that is both informative and thought-provoking. Beyond documenting developments in Tibet, the book raises important questions about cultural preservation, human rights, environmental security, religious freedom, and the future of China's frontier regions. Whether one agrees with all its arguments or not, the volume makes a significant contribution to contemporary discourse on Tibet and merits careful consideration by scholars, policymakers, strategic analysts, and informed readers alike. A welcome addition to any personal or

institutional collection, this book deserves a place in the libraries of think tanks, educational institutions, media organisations, defence establishments, and institutions of governance, both in India and abroad.

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