

China's white paper of lies on Tibet

Written by Tenzing Dhamdul
Thursday, 03 June 2021 04:11

The People's Republic of China was formed as a nation in 1949. Under the helm of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it has published white papers with the sole aim of propagating and letting the world know of its achievements and policies. These reports set the template and act as guidelines for future policies. Many of the CCP's famous rhetoric and polemics come from such reports and have stood the test of time. The four modernizations, seeking truth from facts and thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics are just some examples.

On May 21, China's State Council issued a white paper, titled Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity, calling it an official account to show the world what is really happening in Tibet, and provide researchers and academics with facts and information about the region.

While almost all official Chinese documents are devoid of any form of self-criticism, the white paper on Tibet goes to the extreme in conjuring lies and falsehoods. It was written along the lines of Beijing's "wolf warrior" diplomacy.

The great development — the veil that hides colonialism and exploitation in Tibet

A large portion of this paper talks about how Beijing has made a lot of developments in Tibet, especially in terms of infrastructure, and how it has lifted Tibetans from poverty. It is true that Beijing has brought many infrastructural changes, including airports, almost 100 percent optical cable and mobile access/coverage (as the paper claims), dams and railways.

However, how have these development projects benefited Tibetans and were they even intended to benefit Tibet?

The stark reality is that instead of improving the lives of Tibetans, these projects have become

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a means through which more Han Chinese have moved to the region under the ploy of employment, giving Beijing easier access to Tibet and imposing a surveillance system. While these developments have been a boon to Beijing, they have become a dagger to the heart of Tibet and Tibetans.

This reminds me of Thupten Samphel's book *Tibet: Reports from Exile* in which he writes about being a member of a fact-finding mission that visited Tibet in the 1980s as representatives of the Dalai Lama. The group came across a hydropower project construction site, but instead of seeing a large number of Tibetans working there, they saw many Han Chinese and one solitary Tibetan worker. This not only shows the reality of what was happening in Tibet then, but what will and continues to happen now under the guise of development.

Many buy these arguments, which I find highly amusing, and even non-Chinese academicians tend to push this narrative. The reality is that neocolonialism and exploitation have taken place in Tibet since the Chinese occupation began in 1951. China, a nation that was exploited in many ways by imperialist forces, is now using the very same force and tactics in Tibet, even though the white paper insists that it is imperialist forces that are trying to split Tibet.

The question is who are these imperialist forces mentioned in the paper? If we go by its definition of imperialism, Beijing itself fits the bill perfectly as it commits the very imperialist activities in Tibet that it condemns, as evidenced by these infrastructure projects in which there is an unequal exchange, drain of wealth and exploitation occurring.

Beijing has not only dismantled the physical aspect of Tibet, but also targeted its culture, traditions and people by imposing the Chinese language, bringing a cultural shock to Tibet. As the paper says, there are nearly 1 million Tibetans enrolled in educational institutions (where Mandarin is a compulsory course).

False historical narrative — forcefully shoving false history down our throats

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Chinese history is one of inspiring stories/tales. I highly value, appreciate and envy it for its rich culture and tradition. Yet how the Chinese communist government acts is very different and does not fall in line with its own history.

The destruction caused by the Cultural Revolution throughout China and even in Tibet, where not only the physical edicts of culture were destroyed, but uprooted people from their culture, is truly hard to fathom. Many speak and highlight these dark tales, including in the book by Tsering Woeser titled Forbidden Memory. Tibet during the Cultural Revolution.

Instead of being sorry and repenting for the chaos, harm and genocide created then and ushering in a new era, Beijing has adopted a policy of pursuing a "false historical narrative." Fortunately, we live in the age of technology and people can catch up with the truth. Following are some illustrations of blatant lies in the white paper.

First, it claims that the title of the Dalai Lama was conferred by the Qing emperor to the 5th Dalai Lama. This is completely false as the title of the Dalai Lama was conferred to the 3rd Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso, by the Mongol ruler Altan Khan. This Mongol term, meaning the "Ocean of Wisdom," is synonymous with the word Dalai Lama throughout the world.

Second, it never mentions how the Dalai Lama, his government and many Tibetans fled due to the violence and repression brought by the Chinese People's Liberation Army forces in Tibet. Instead, it simply mentions how "after a rebellion broke out in March 1959, the State Council issued an order to dissolve the Tibetan local government."

The fact that the Tibetan government was forced to escape and seek exile is well-known to the world, yet the report fails to acknowledge this and instead states how the council ordered the dissolution of the Tibetan government. What government was there to dissolve in the first place if the whole government had fled to India and sought refuge?

Seeking truth from falsehood

This is a very popular rhetoric of the CCP. This phrase was a driving force when China was undergoing liberalization during the late 1970s and is still prevalent today. Unfortunately, it is tangential and opposite to the dictum when applied. What we are seeing is how it is using falsehoods and letting one seek trust from it.

This is highlighted by the fact that the white paper blatantly blames the Dalai Lama for instigating riots and even preparing a "self-immolation kit" to propagate the practice in Tibet, which has since taken the lives of more than 150 Tibetans. The Dalai Lama has never encouraged self-immolation, is always the first one to condemn it, and has even said the act goes against Buddhist teachings.

How are we, as readers, to seek truth from fact if the fact is false. Beijing has added oil to the fire by cunningly professing that the Chinese government and its religious offices are the sole body for authenticating the reincarnation of living Buddhas. It insists it has the final say in deciding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, the irony being how this is the lama that it has harshly criticized.

A government that does not revere and instead shamelessly puts the Dalai Lama in a bad light at every turn does not have an iota of authority to decide his reincarnation. If it seeks authority, it should first seek a direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama and progress from there. Otherwise, it is just noise when Beijing shamelessly proclaims it has the authority to decide the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

I hope my sincere views have brought some understanding as to the thoughts about the white paper by a Tibetan who, due to repression and occupation, had to flee his own land, but is fortunate enough to reside and enjoy the privileges of a free world, albeit limited as a refugee.

Even the title of the white paper seems superficial, as we Tibetans were never liberated, but rather annexed and occupied. Does Beijing think its neocolonial acts can be passed off as "liberation" in the modern era?

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In a nutshell the white paper is like an arrogant person who only boasts about their achievements and does not reflect on their mistakes. I would like to say more, but suffice it to say, we can see what is happening in Tibet and other areas under the governance of the CCP.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2021/06/03](#)