

Exploration on the Historical Roots of “Tibet Independence” From the View of British Military Invasions Into Tibet in Late Qing Dynasty

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Abstract

Since the middle of the 13th century, Tibet has come within the territorial jurisdiction of Chinese government and has been an inseparable part of China's territory. The problem of so-called “Tibet independence” only appeared in the recent 100 years. It is the outcome of the imperialist aggression, intervention and plotting in modern times, as well as the conspiracy of the western anti-China forces in contemporary times. Looking back at the history of British twice military invasions of Tibet which happened over one hundred years ago and analyzing the reasons for the failure of the Qing administration and Tibetan local government against the British, we can detect the historical roots of so-called “Tibet independence” and have a better understanding towards the nature of the problem, so as to get some enlightenment about how to handle the issue properly in today's complicated international environment.

Key words: British military invasion into Tibet; Anti-British invasion; Tibet independence

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INTRODUCTION

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Since ancient times, Tibet has been an inalienable part of China. During its formation, Tibetan people has

mingled with other ethnic groups in adjacent areas such as Han, Qiang, and Mongolian, and has been an integral member of the Chinese nation. Tibet has never shown up in international community as an independent state in history. And until the early 20th century, the late Qing Dynasty, no such word as “independence” ever existed in Tibetan language. But in modern human history, under the conspiracy of Western colonialists, there appeared the so-called “Tibet independence” issue. What's more ridiculous, after the 2008 Lhasa “3 • 14” incident and a series of violence undermining the Beijing Olympic torch relay, the Dalai clique set 2012 as the “Year of Tibet lobbying”, and then made 2013 as the “Year of Tibet supporting”, crowing about the so-called “Tibet independence Year”. In February 2014, the 14th Dalai Lama even visited the United States, not only talking at length about “compassion” and making speech on “non-violence”, but also meeting with President Barack Obama in the White House for the third time. Basically speaking, “Tibet independence” is the outcome of the imperialist aggression against China during the late 19th and early 20th century, as well as the result of the Western colonial powers' attempt and ambition to carve up China and turn Tibet into their colony. Tracing British twice military invasion into Tibet during late Qing Dynasty and exploring the historical roots of the “Tibet independence” will help the current society to have a better understanding towards the nature of the international “Tibet separatists”, so as to protect the contemporary international peace and promote the harmony of the whole world.

1. PROFILES OF TIBET EARLY HISTORY

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Located in southwest China, rich in mineral resources, Tibetan Plateau was divided before the 7th century. Songtsen Gampo unified the Tibetan area, established Tubo Dynasty, and maintained close and friendly relations with the Tang Dynasty through intermarriage and cultural exchanges. From the mid-9th century, with the collapse of

the Tubo Dynasty, Tibet remained in separatist regimes in the next 300 years. Until the early 13th century, Mongolian general Dorda Che ended its disintegrating history with armed forces, and brought the entire Tibetan areas under the jurisdiction of Mongolian Prince Godan. During the following 20 years, the major local forces in Tibet made their own development relying on different Mongolian royals. When Xue Chan Emperor acceded to the throne in Yuan Dynasty, he reunified Tibetan area and incorporated Tibet into Chinese territory. Xue Chan Khan established consolidated garrison and army and set up Executive Institute in Tibet (Ya, 2001, pp.6-9). From the mid-13th century, Tibet came under Chinese jurisdiction formally, since then, the edicts, orders and seals issued by Chinese emperors on politics, economy, legislation, and military affairs have actually played as the High Command in Tibet. Throughout the Ming Dynasty, all of the local governors, the hierarch of various religious sects, and the hieratic and temporal aristocrats were bestowed both the titles and the official posts by Chinese emperors. During the Qing Dynasty, ever after Emperor Kangxi’s pacification of the Junggar forces which threatened the public security in Tibet, the central government decided to appoint two High Commissioners (Amban) to supervise Tibetan affairs on behalf of the Qing government from 1727 in order to stabilize the Tibet society and reduce various power struggles (Xie, 2005, p.128). In addition, after fighting off Gurkha’s twice invasions into Tibet, Emperor Qianlong promulgated twenty-nine points of the “Imperial Constitution of Governing Aftermath Tibet”, specifying the obligations of the High Commissioners of Tibet (Amban). They enjoyed equal political and social standings with Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, presided Tibetan affairs as the Imperial Commissioners, and handled all of the local affairs in Tibet on behalf of the central government of the Qing Dynasty. From then on, the Chinese central government’s jurisdiction and governance on Tibet was institutionalized as a historical custom.

2. ANALYSES OF THE REASONS OF BRITISH INVASIONS INTO TIBET AT THE END OF THE 19th CENTURY

The Westerners’ encroach on Tibet could be traced back to the 17th century. In 1661, the Austrian missionary of the Society of Jesus Johann Grueber set off from Beijing, and arrived at Lhasa after five months’ trek. He lived in Lhasa for one month (Zhang, 2013). Later, some missionaries from Portugal, Italy and other countries came to Tibet, trying to pry and reveal the mystery of the snow-covered plateau by the name of preaching their religion. Yet the number of the missionaries who ever entered Tibet was quite limited, and they only stayed for a short while as individuals. In the 18th century, the British attempted to

extend to Tibet on the pretext of intervening in Nepal unification war, and dispatched the secretary of East India Company George Bogle to Tibet via Bhutan. In November 1774, the so-called “peaceful trade envoy” arrived at Shigatse with special mission, becoming the first British man to enter the snowy plateau (Markham, 2010, pp.1-4). Since then, Britain opened the door of Tibet and began their infiltration. Later, during the aggressive wars against Tibet launched by Gurkha twice, Britain tried to provoke dissension with might and main (Liang, 2008). Yet, the Qing government successfully defeated the invasion of Gurkha Army and signed a treaty with the Gurkhas. From that time, Gurkha, Bhutan and Sikkim became the vassal states of China, together with the natural geographic advantage of the Himalayas, forming a crescent protective barrier for Tibet. Besides, according to the Twenty-nine Points of the “Imperial Constitution of Governing Aftermath Tibet” promulgated by the Qing Government in 1793, Tibetan officials at all levels were strictly prohibited from private contact with foreign countries, which strangled the British early attempt to infiltrate into Tibet. However, the ambition of the British coveting Tibet was hard to restrain and even intensified gradually, and a breach was finally detected in 1875. In the second year after Emperor Guangxu acceded, while the British was investigating about the road construction from Yunnan to Burma, the interpreter A. R. Margary from the British Consulate in Shanghai was killed in the border of Yunnan. Britain used the Margary incident as an excuse and forced the Qing government to sign “Yantai Treaty” (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.323) which included permission for the British to enter Tibet. In this way, Britain got the chance to enter Tibet from the Indian subcontinent. Later in 1888 and from 1903 to 1904 Britain even launched brutal armed wars to invade Tibet. Since then, the tranquility and peace of the snow-covered shrine were completely broken, and Tibet was pushed into the whirlpools of Tibetan separatism crisis and suffered a lot. One glance at the underlying historical reasons why Britain launched two aggressive wars would help us to get some insight into the situation.

2.1 The Pursuit of Economic Interests—The Eternal Goal

During the late 19th and early 20th century, all of the major capitalist countries throughout the world had entered the stage of imperialism. To meet the needs of their economic development, the big powers grasped every opportunity to exploit raw materials and capture markets all over the world. In 1600, the British colonialists set up the East India Company in India, and turned many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America into its sources of raw materials and outlets for commodities through military occupation and political domination. In its imperial zenith of the British Empire in the late 19th century, the Indian colony could no longer be able to meet its growing needs

of expanding trade markets. Thus the adjoining Tibet with its natural geopolitical advantages attracted great attention from Britain. On one hand, with its powerful influence in India, British colonialists could make use of the East India Company as a springboard and easily encroach on Tibet. On the other hand, Tibet, with its long-time self-sufficient economy, turned out to be an ideal commercial market for Great Britain. Therefore, Britain urgently desired to develop and monopolize trade in Tibet, dominate the Tibetan market in order to meet the British demand of commodity dumping in Tibet. Britain even recommended vigorously to the Qing government about the profit of Indo-Tibetan trade by the excuse that it was more convenient for the means of production from inner China to be transported first by water to India and then to Lhasa via Darjeeling, compared with the overland freight to Lhasa (Zhao, 2004), trying all means to open the gate of trade with Tibet.

In addition, it had been such long time for the British Empire to capture various means of production in India via the East India Company that the raw materials available in India were dwindling gradually. While Tibet was rich in natural resources and mineral resources, which Britain had been coveting for quite long time, especially those resources as wool, leather, gold and silver, and borax. It had been Britain's dream to turn Tibet as its exclusive source of raw materials. With possession of Tibet, production materials as cashmere, wool, metals and other minerals from Tibet could be directly delivered to Europe via India, meeting the demand of large industrial machinery production in the United Kingdom.

2.2 The Guarantee of Political Strategy—The Intense Power Competition

After the Opium War, the capitalist powers opened the door of China through military aggression, and China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The imperialism powers had seen through the decline and the incompetence of the Qing government and initiated the craze to carve up China in the Orient, marking off their respective spheres of influence in succession in China. At this moment, if Britain sent troops to occupy the snow-covered plateau in the southwest border, the Qing government had trouble even in taking care of itself, not to mention any protection against any harassment in the borderland. Once possessing Tibet and designating Tibet as its sphere of influence, Britain could expand its colony from India into Tibet, which could not only help to create geopolitical barriers with the geographical advantage, but also help Britain to eliminate interruptions and suppress interference from other big powers so as to ensure its absolute control and utmost profits of India. Besides, Tibet could be further extended eastward to its existing sphere of influence in Yangtze River, thus Britain's influence region could be connected throughout China from the east to the west and Britain's interests could be maximally achieved and guaranteed in China.

What's more, controlling Tibet was also the insistent needs of the British Empire to compete against Tsarist Russia for privilege in China in the Great Game. When the Sino-British "Yantai Treaty" was signed, Russia was also casting covetous eyes on Tibet, attempting to encroach southward from Xinjiang upon Tibet. Britain had always taken Russia as its primary opponent of vying for sphere of influence in Asia and shown great concern about Russia meddling in Tibet, worrying that once Tibet was accessed as the "protection scope" of Russia, Britain's vested interests in India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan would be threatened (worries about Russia's influence in Tibet were mentioned in Young husband, 1927, pp.80-81; Candler, 1905, pp.35-36; Waddell, 1905, p.56). Hence, Britain was trying desperately to make Tibet into a "buffer area" or even "buffer state" between Britain and Russia. The Russian General Staff, just like Curzon (the British Viceroy of India), also regarded Tibet as the east side of the vital buffer zone between the two empires engaging in expansion. Both of the two big powers believed that this buffer zone should be their own unique territory. Thus arose the problem. If Russia was convinced that a friendly Tibet under its control was the necessary safeguards for Russia's sovereignty in Sikkim and Pamir, Curzon would also be sure that Tibet was an essential area for the British Empire to protect its Himalayan vassal states. These states had been considered as the fortress to protect the indigenous Indian (MacGregor, 1985, p.295). As a result, the British government had found a high-sounding excuse for him to send troops to Tibet — to fight against Russia's growing influence in Tibet, sever Russia's ambitions towards Tibet, and eliminate Russia's threat to British Empire on its vested interests in Asia.

3. THE OUTLINE ABOUT BRITISH TWICE INVASIONS INTO TIBET IN THE LATE QING DYNASTY

3.1 The First Invasion

In the early 19th century, Britain grabbed several strategically important regions through *deception* under the guise of aiding Sikkim. Nepal asked for help from the High Commissioner in Tibet yet achieved nothing, and was forced to sign the unequal "Sage Li Treaty" with Britain, falling into Britain's control. The king of Sikkim wrote to remind the High Commissioner and the Tibetan government of strengthening the border to guard against British invasion. The High Commissioner and the local Regent sent officials to Sikkim and signed a document with the king of Sikkim, affirming that British army was not allowed to enter Tibet via Sikkim. Shortly after that, Britain invaded Sikkim and Bhutan through intimidation and deception, using these border countries as springboard and building roads and bridges

in no time. The Sikkim king had no choice but to go to Tibet to take refuge, and the Tibetan government issued a decree which forbade foreigners to enter Tibet. Yet, some British soldiers still crossed the border arbitrarily, trying to explore the way into Tibet even without any authorization. In order to defend the homeland, Tibetan people set up posts along Lingtu Mountain in 1866, placing the statue of God Guardian at the posts, and built up forts 50 kilometers away from Darjeeling to keep the British away from Tibet. Hearing about the news, the British ambassador immediately sent a letter to the Foreign Affairs Yamen of Qing government, complaining that the purpose of Tibetans building forts was to prevent trade. British army could destroy the forts easily, but since they had no intention to provoke dispute, they thereby notified the High Commissioner to warn the Tibetans (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.330). Getting the notification, the Qing government immediately commanded the High Commissioner Wenshuo, ordering the local people to withdraw from the posts. The Tibetan government convened a general assembly of the Drepung, Ganden, and Sera three major monasteries and Tashil Lhunpo Monastery in February Tibetan Fire Pig Year (1887), and manifested to Qing administration through the High Commissioner that Lingtu Mountain had always been the sacred territory of Tibet and the posts there could never be removed. Meanwhile, they required the British army to withdraw from Sikkim (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.330). Yet the British showed no respect or any attention. They assembled 2,000 soldiers at the border, conveyed four cannons, and established a base for invading Tibet.

Under the support of the High Commissioner Wenshuo, the Tibetan Regent and the local Kashag government drafted the “Joint Pledge”, recruiting soldiers and appointing mdav-dpon (also Dapon, local commander in chief) Lhadingsé and Tsedron (regent and official for receiving guests of the Dalai Lama) SonamGyaltsen to command militia from Gongbo and over 500 militia from Kham to the border of Sikkim and Tibet to strengthen the defense. At this time, the king of Sikkim proposed peace negotiation, but the British refused. On March 20, 1888 (Tibetan Soil Rat Year), the British launched a surprise attack to the Tibetan border garrison. With the encouragement and support of the High Commissioner Wenshuo, the Tibetans fought back bravely with matchlocks, bows and arrows, swords and spears and repelled the British intrusion twice. On March 25, under the cover of artillery the British attacked again, with the inefficient and primitive weapons the Tibetan army was forced to retreat first to Gnathong and then to Chumbi. Yet as the Tibetans were determined to beat back the invaders, the Tibetan government nominated Kalon (official in Kashag government) Lhalu YesheNorbu as the commander in chief in August, taking 10,000 reinforcements to the frontier. Before setting off, the 13th Dalai Lama bestowed amulets and blessings to all

the officers and soldiers, inspiring them to drive off the invaders. While the Tibetan soldiers and civilians were fighting against the intruders, the Qing administration dismissed the High Commissioner Wenshuo who strongly supported the resistance of the Tibetans, and replaced with Shengtai as the new High Commissioner, who carried out the compromise policy strictly as a submissive spokesman of the Qing government and compelled the Tibetan troops to retreat several times. Shengtai even went to the British camp to negotiate with the invaders. Under the dual pressures of the Qing government and the High Commissioner, the Tibetan government finally ordered the withdrawal of the Tibetan army.

On March 17, 1890 (Guangxu sixteen years), the Qing government sent the High Commissioner Shengtai to Kolkata in India and signed the “Anglo-Chinese Convention” about Tibet and India with the British Viceroy of India Henry Charles Keith Lansdowne (details in Wu, 2006, pp.182-185). The convention included 8 articles, with the main contents as follows, (a) Sikkim was put under Britain’s protection, (b) the borderline between China and Sikkim was delimited, (c) nomadic issues, trade issues and diplomatic issues remained for further negotiation. Thus the suzerain-vassal relations between China and Sikkim were renounced and the British obtained the possession of Sikkim, further extending its influence towards Tibet. Then on December 5, 1893 (Guangxu nineteen years), the Qing government dispatched the commander He Changrong to sign the additional provisions of the “Anglo-Chinese Convention” about Tibet and India with British Secretary for Home Affairs Paul in Darjeeling, also called the “Tibet-India Provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention” or the “Tibet-India Riders”. The additional provisions included 12 articles, mainly as follows, opening Yadong as a commercial port, permitting free trade from Britain, allowing British envoys’ stationing there, free of taxes for Tibet-India trade in five years in Yadong since its opening, restricting the traditional nomadic rights of the Tibetans in Sikkim. Finally, the first anti-British war, also known as “Soil Rat War” (taking place in Tibetan Soil Rat Year) wound up with the Qing government constraint to sign unequal treaties with British Empire. But the treaties aroused strong resentment of the Tibetan people, and received strong resistance. In the document presented to the High Commissioner Shengtai written jointly by the Regent DemoHutuktu, Kalon Rampa Tashi Dargye and some local representatives, it was clearly indicated that the Tibetans would never accept those treaties about boundaries and trade.

3.2 The Second Invasion

Through the two unequal conventions which Britain imposed on the Qing government during its first invasion, the British obtained great interests in Tibet, inducing Russia’s coveting towards Tibet. Russia also dispatched

expedition, Buddhists, businessmen to Tibet, with an attempt to extending its influence there. They even sent Buryat and Kalmyk Mongols who believed in Tibetan Buddhism as spies to go into the local temples, with the most typical representative of the Russia-born Buryat Mogol Dorjiyev (Russian name Agvan Dorjiyev), who came up to the upper class of the monastery as the Tsanshab Khenpo (Monastic preceptor who accompanied high-ranking Lamas in studying sutras) of the 13th Dalai Lama (Ya, 2001, pp.126-127). Dorjiyev took advantage of his position, not only instigating separation among the Tibetan upper class from the motherland, but also drawing over the three major monasteries and local officials through allocating funds appropriated by Russian government in the name of donation in attempt to cultivate pro-Russian forces in the upper class in Tibet. Having witnessed Russia's growing influence in Tibet, Britain speeded up its scheme to invade Tibet. The British Viceroy of India Curzon sent letters to the 13th Dalai Lama through Bhutan and Nepal three times in 1899, 1900 and 1901 (Wu, 2006, p.195), talking about issues as the Tibetan border and trade between Britain and Tibet. But Dalai Lama had discerned his intention and returned all of his letters, asserting that he had no right to correspond with any foreigners without the permission of the Qing government. Irritated by Dalai's response, Curzon exerted every effort to persuade the British Minister of India Hamilton to agree to occupy Tibet by force so as to turn Tibet into British protectorate and buffer state between British and Russian spheres of influence, if no other ways could be found to control Tibet. Yet according to Hamilton and other representatives of the British government, it was not an appropriate time for armed aggression. They recommended the administrative officers stationed in Sikkim expedition along the border set in 1890 treaty expelling the Tibetans who stepped into British jurisdictions. But Curzon took advantage of even distorted the instructions from the British government, ordering the British Executive in Sikkim White to take more than 200 soldiers to break into Jaggang in May, 1902 under the guise of negotiation. They made reconnaissance and maps, and took pictures everywhere in Khampa Dzong in preparation for large-scale military offensive. They even plundered 5,000 sheep and 600 cattle from the Tibetan herdsmen while leaving (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.337). Later came the news that the Tibetan delegation led by Dorjiyev were received by Russian Czar Nicholas II. Curzon hyped exaggeratedly the threat of Russia's control over Tibet to the security of India under the fabricated pretext of the secret treaty on Tibet signed between China and Russia. Then he plotted the "international affair" that the Tibetan government captured two Sikkim spies prying for Britain, looking for public support for British invasion into Tibet. In Curzon's opinion, the Tibet policy of the British-Indian government was to make sure Tibet aligned with Britain instead of Russia (Lamb, 1986, p.195),

just as the commander Younghusband dispatched later to Tibet mentioned in his memoir that the purpose of this move was to cope with the increasing influence of Russia in Tibet (Younghusband, 1927, p.81). Finally, Curzon managed to persuade the Balfour administration into armed aggression towards Tibet.

In April 1903, under the pressure from Britain, the Chinese central government instructed the High Commissioner Youtai to send representatives to Yadong for negotiation. Yet Curzon had held the ambition towards Shigatse and Gyantse, and suddenly changed the negotiation venue to Khampa Dzong, and then dispatched Brigadier-General James Ronald Leslie Macdonald, Colonel Francis Younghusband, Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Brander to take troops to occupy Khampa Dzong, plundering livestock from Tibetan residents. They took diversionary tactics to induce Tibetans to negotiate in Khampa Dzong. While the Tibetan deployed the army in Khampa Dzong, the British troops withdrew abruptly from Khampa Dzong, increased up to 3,000 soldiers and nearly 10,000 logistical personnel as porters and camp followers (Wu, 2006, p.204), marching towards New Chumbi. As the troops of Qing Dynasty stationed there didn't countattack and there was no enough time for the Tibetans to deploy troops due to British sudden strategy alteration, the British went straight to Phari Dzong at the end of 1903. After the occupation of the entire New Chumbi valley, the British advanced without any resistance to Chumik Shenko under the third peak of the Himalayas, where they first met with the low wall fortification led by Dapon Lhadingsse and Namseling. When the honest and simple Tibetan commanders believed and fulfilled the British proposal to extinguish the fuses of their matchlocks as the precondition for peace negotiation, the British army only disarmed for show, and soon reloaded and surrounded the Tibetan army by roundabout ways. In about 15 minutes after the negotiation, the British suddenly broke the commitment and fired towards the negotiating representatives and the Tibetan army. The Tibet responded in haste, but was hopelessly outnumbered. As a result, more than 1,400 officers and soldiers were slaughtered brutally (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.341).

Chumik Shenko Massacre aroused great resentment of the Tibetan people, and the Tibetans were spontaneously organized to take various measures to fight against the invaders. Even if the Tibetans stationed in Guru struggled resolutely to block the British aggression, the British army still advanced steadily as they were equipped with much more sophisticated weapons, and finally they arrived at Gyantse in April, 1904. The local government Kashag mobilized throughout Tibet, recruiting peasants, Idab-Idod (monk soldiers) and militia, and deployed defenses in Gyantse and Nakartse. Despite great disparity of weapons, the Tibetans stroke back valiantly with strong faith. In addition to several large-scale direct confrontations

at Nani Monastery, Tsechen monastery and Gyantse Dzong, the Tibetans also combated the intruders through circuitous tactics, night raids, surprise attacks, exerting every effort to resist with outdated weapons such as swords and firelocks. It took 3 months for the British to finally occupy Gyantse at great cost, which was far beyond their expectation. After the fall of Gyantse, the British continued to advance towards Lhasa. Even if the Tibetan army tried very hard to guard the Karo La, the essential pass to Lhasa, the High Commissioner forced the Tibetan army to withdraw from the fortification of Nakartse at the behest of the Qing government. While the Karo La pass reported an emergency, the Qing government didn't send even a single soldier to assist. Finally, on August 3, 1904, the British reached Lhasa. To avoid capture and coercion by the British, the 13th Dalai Lama left and went to Qinghai and later to Outer Mongolia to seek for assistance, after appointing Ganden Tripa as Acting Regent. Everywhere the British troop went, the Tibetans were brutally looted, not only for strategic materials but also for monastic properties such as the religious books, statues, and artworks. More than 400 mules were used to transport the valuable treasures constantly to India (McDonald, 1996, p.42). The British archaeologist coming together with the British army L. A. Waddell was quite complacent while classifying their war trophies, taking these precious Tibetan spoils as the authentic early Oriental historical data with profound magnificence which the European had never accessed (Xu, 2004).

From the obvious resistance and revolt of Lhasa residents, the British realized the resentment and hatred of the Tibetans towards them, and decided to return to India before the approach of the unfavorable weather in winter. They threatened and forced the Regent and Kashag government to sign the humiliating “Convention of Lhasa” (Ya, 2001, pp.142-143), with the main contents as follows: recognizing the Sikkim-Tibet border provided in the 1890 Treaty; allowing the British to trade in Yadong, Gyantse, and Gartok; Tibet paying a large indemnity up to UK £ 500,000; no ceding Tibetan land to any other countries; no permission of entry of any other foreigners into Tibet; no granting any rights to other countries. The second anti-British war also ended up with the compromise and capitulation of the Qing government. Yet, as the convention actually converted Tibet into British protectorate, the Qing administration commanded the High Commissioner Youtai not to sign on it under the pressure of the patriotic public opinions. Thus, it became an illegal treaty which had not been approved by the Chinese government. Confined to the international public opinions, the British government had to recall the British Viceroy of India Curzon in 1905. Later, the Qing government signed 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention (also known as Beijing Convention) with Britain in Beijing

(Ya, 2001, pp.146-148). Although some provisions of the 1904 treaty were confirmed, the British agreed not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. Thus the sovereignty of the Qing government towards Tibet was protected.

4. THE INSIGHT INTO THE HISTORICAL ROOT OF “TIBET INDEPENDENCE” FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FAILURE OF ANTI-BRITISH INVASIONS

From the panorama of British twice invasions into Tibet in the late Qing Dynasty, in spite of the determination, resolution, and great efforts of the local valiants, the Tibetan failed to defeat and drive out the invaders. What's worse, the imperialist aggressors fulfilled their ambition of obtaining privileges from Tibet through unequal conventions, and stepped up insatiably for further conspiracy to split Tibet from China. Through analyzing the reasons for the failure of anti-British invasions, it is helpful for us to detect not only how Tibet fell into the scheme and was trapped to step onto a road of no return, but also the historical roots of “Tibet independence”.

4.1 The Backward Feudal Serf System in Tibet Was the Basic Reason of the Failure of the Anti-British Invasions

Up till the late 19th century and early 20th century, the feudal serfdom which had lasted for a long time in Tibet became even more decayed, bringing about deterioration in every aspect in Tibet. Tibetan society, no matter the politics or the economy was rather backward and left far behind, compared with that of the British Empire which had developed into monopoly capitalism. The upper class and feudal aristocracy in Tibet lived a luxurious life relying on the institutional guarantee of the serf system. Besides, under the influence of the central government of Qing Dynasty, they were rather arrogantly ignorant, complacently self-conceited, and exclusively conservative, with little awareness or consciousness to learn modern science and technology. The Tibetan military forces were very weak, with small number of regular army, and the provisionally conscripted militias or serfs were either loosely organized or inexperienced, not to mention the effective intelligence or transportation system. Their weapons were extremely backward as well, isolated on the medieval matchlocks, jingals, swords, spears, and even primitive slings, lagging far behind with the artillery, rifles and Maxim machine guns of the British army. The matchlocks of the Tibetan army needed to be ammunitioned every 5 minutes, and once the fuse extinguished, it took more than 10 minutes to fire again. This was actually the direct reason which caused the Chumik Shenko tragedy. What's more, there were no veteran and competent leaders in Tibetan army. They

relied blindly on the spiritual power of religion, lack of awareness to take full advantage of the geographic, natural or other favorable conditions of plateau combat, such as the complex terrain, tough weather, supply difficulties, and the Tibetans' hatred towards the intruders. In stead of employing flexible strategies and tactics, they confronted the British most of the time, exposing the vulnerable weaknesses directly to the invaders. The Tibetan troops were trapped several times with heavy casualties, as their sincere faith and upright personalities were exploited by the intruders. Moreover, even confronted with the formidable enemy, the ruling class in Tibet was still indulging in power struggle. After the enthronement of the 13th Dalai Lama, there occurred the attempted murder of Dalai Lama in August 1895, called Demo incident (Ya, 2001, pp.118-121), which gave opportunities to the aggressors to sow discord between Tibet and the Qing Dynasty.

4.2 The Blind Compromise and Concessions of the Qing Government were the Main Reason for the Failure of the Anti-British Invasions

After the Opium War, the Qing government was increasingly declining as an ageing and impoverished regime, just like a candle flickering in the wind, seeing the imperialist states compete for spheres of influence and trample its sovereignty with no power to contend. Facing the imperialists' armed invasion, the Qing government was so subservient that she retreated constantly, gave way blindly and even followed the lead of the foreigners. For instance, when receiving the letter from the British about the Tibetans building up security posts at Lingtu Mountain, the Qing government commanded the Tibetans to withdraw the posts hurriedly through the High Commissioner. When the British invaders were marshaled at the border of Tibet, the Qing government repeatedly demanded the High Commissioner to negotiate with the British. When the British marched to the interior of Tibet threatening Lhasa, the Qing government ordered to remove the fortification and defense along the way. This kind of capitulationism attitude of the Qing government actually provided convenience for the invaders to open the door of Tibet, which aroused great dissatisfaction of the Tibetan local government. Under the appeal of the 13th Dalai Lama, most of the upper monastic members and government officials defied the British invasion forces equipped with modern weapons. They demonstrated their patriotic passion by leading the Tibetans to fight against the invaders resolutely, resisting the surrendering route of the Qing government. Strongly opposing those advocates of compromise, the 13th Dalai Lama mobilized throughout Tibet, and even dismissed or detained four senior officials who had proposed to retreat and compromise in order to defend the territorial security in the frontier of the motherland. Confronted with the massive attack of the British, Dalai Lama asked for financial support, weapons

and reinforcement from the Qing government for several times, but was always refused. Considering the constant concession of the Qing government, together with the preaching of the Russian spy Dorjiyev at his side, Dalai Lama came up with the idea to ally with Russia to fight against Britain. Dalai Lama sent Dorjiyev as emissary with his letters secretly to Russia four times, seeking assistance from Russia. Even in 1904, while learning the British advance to Lhasa, Dalai Lama still planned to go first to Urga and then Beijing, in hope of getting help from Russia and the Chinese court. On June 12, Dalai Lama called Ganden Tripa Losang Gyaltzen to Potala Palace, instructing

“.....Now that the British troops were approaching Lhasa, I still can't make decisions. Afraid of bungling the political and religious undertaking, I thereby intend to go to Beijing enroute Mongolia for an audience with the Empress Dowager Cixi and the Emperor Guangxu, in order to save Tibet with every effort” (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.343).

Therefore, Dalai Lama left Tibet with no intention to flee or escape, but to avoid being coerced by the British to sign any unequal treaties that might undermine the interests of the country and to seek aid outside. Up till then, Dalai Lama still held strong patriotism with all his heart to the motherland. He blamed the fatuous and incompetent High Commissioners who distorted or concealed the true situation of Tibet to the Emperor for the failure of the anti-British invasions. Yet, the Qing government listened to the slander of the High Commissioner that Dalai Lama had fled, and ordered the abolishment of the title of Dalai Lama. Even if the title of Dalai Lama was reinstated later, his status was greatly influenced and weakened, which hurt his patriotic enthusiasm immensely. Finally, as Dalai Lama's proposal to the Qing government that he report Tibetan issues to the Emperor directly instead of through the High Commissioners was refused and he recognized the incompetence and corruption of the Qing government as well as its traitorous nature, he lost confidence completely towards the central government. Thus, the highest political and religious leader of Tibet was pushed astray from a patriot to a separatist to seek for self-protection.

4.3 The Changefulness of the High Commissioners in Tibet Was the Direct Reason for the Failure of the Anti-British Invasions

Both the appointment and the ideology of the High Commissioners during the British invasions were changeable. During the first invasion, the High Commissioner Wenshuo was deeply moved by the resolution of the Tibetans to drive away the invaders, and determined to resist the concession policy of the Qing government. He was greatly loved by the local people, as he encouraged the Tibetans to fight against the intruders and helped to make strategic plan for the Tibetan army. He reported several times to the central government,

suggesting deploying forces and preparing provisions, getting ready for war. Yet, the Qing government dismissed him for fear of his attitude and behavior influencing the negotiation with Britain (Xu et al., 2009). The dismissal of Wenshuo severely impacted the prestige of the central government in the minds of the local people, as well as the morale of Tibetan army. It not only increased the centrifugal tendencies of the Tibetans from the central government, but also provided “godsend” opportunities for the British to invade Tibet.

The High Commissioners like Shengtai were the faithful executors of the surrender policy of the Qing government (Che, 2004; 2012). After their assumption of post, they took the mandate of the central government and went around to negotiate with the British, earnestly implementing the concessional and even traitorous strategy of the Qing government. They dealt with the treacherous British army, the unconditionally submissive Qing government and the resolutely resistant Tibetan government, exhausted and enduring humiliation. Their continual tameness and abject submission caused great resentment of the Tibetans', resulting in growing deviation of the local government from the central government.

The High Commissioners like Yugang and Youtai, only took their post in Tibet as a springboard for future promotion. They were either indifferent to government affairs or muddleheaded and incapable, indulging in revelries and corruption (Zeng, 2009; Che, 2012). Confronted with the continued advancement of the British army, they showed neither support nor encouragement to the Tibetan army. On the contrary, they imputed the British invasion to the resistance of the local people, claiming foolishly that the British might stop pushing forward if the Tibetans gave up opposing. Their attitude and behavior severely suppressed and frustrated the morale of the Tibetans to fight against the invaders. At the moment that Nani Monastery and Tsechen Monastery were lost and Gyantse was on the hazard, while the local government Kashag wanted to discuss the warfare with the High Commissioner Youtai, Youtai replied “according to the imperial edict, the problem between Britain and Tibet can only be solved through peace negotiations, with no resort to armed forces. Now I am in poor health condition. I’ll go to Gyantse to negotiate with the British when I recover.” (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.342) When the British troops arrived and stationed in Lhasa, the Tibetan residents organized spontaneously to boycott the British. And some of them even organized assassination of the British officers. Whereas, Youtai sent a lot of flour and food to the British camp, and reported to the central government not only to absolve guilt for the British invaders, but also accuse Dalai Lama of escaping with seal in breach of his duty. Such conduct bred unrest in Tibet, bringing about increasing conflicts between the local government and the central government. As a result, Dalai Lama completely lost confidence and trust on the

High Commissioners who should have taken up the responsibility of presiding over Tibet, thus planting the seeds of the “Tibet independence” crisis.

Having witnessed the increasingly chaotic situation in Tibet, the High Commissioners like Zhang Yintang, Lian Yu spared no efforts to advocate reform (details of reform in Wu, 2006, p.249-277). Ever since the twice failure of the anti-British war, the Qing government also recognized the necessity and importance of strengthening the sovereign jurisdiction of the central government over Tibet, and strongly supported the High Commissioners for rectification in Tibet. They launched the New Deal reforms represented by investigating the situations, rectifying the local polity, establishing the administrative organization composed of nine departments, implementing troop training and fund raising, casting silver coins, setting up schools, and initiating institutions like Post and Telecommunication Offices, clinics, translation departments and police offices. Many of the measures taken had played an essential role in maintaining the stability and boosting the economy in Tibet, and thereby were upheld by the Tibetan residents. But those measures aiming at changing the traditional theocracy system in Tibet and putting secularism into effect emphasized the direct jurisdiction of the central government over Tibet and restricted Dalai and Panchen Lama only as the religious leaders away from the internal and diplomatic affairs. It not only threatened the dominant position of Dalai Lama and the upper local officials, but also affected the interests of the privileged upper class. As a result, Dalai Lama was pushed to launch his “New Deal” reforms designed to defend the dignity and status of Tibet and ensure the theocratic status of the religious leaders while he returned to Tibet from India. Dalai Lama expected to promote the development of Tibet through the officials trained by the British and the democratic ideology advocated by the British, which gave opportunities for the British imperialists to induce Tibet into the trap of “Tibetan separatism”.

4.4 Ignoring the Strategic Position of Nepal, Bhutan and Other Neighboring Countries was the Important Reason for the Failure of the Anti-British Invasions

As early as the 18th century, the Qing Dynasty had established the status of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim as the vassal state by pacifying the civil strife and quelling the insurgency. In the following one hundred years, the Qing government had maintained close relations with these countries in the framework of suzerain-vassal relationship. However, from the 19th century, with the great ambition towards Tibet, the British-Indian government began its premeditated invasion and encroachment upon Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim, attempting to take the geopolitical advantage to infiltrate into Tibet through the control of the periphery small countries. When the British invaded Nepal

in 1814, Nepal asked the High Commissioners in Tibet for help. Yet being blamed by the High Commissioner for “stirring up trouble” (Puntsok et al., 2012, p.328), Nepal was forced to sign unequal treaties with the British and fell into the control of Great Britain. After that, the British-Indian government further extended its tentacles into Bhutan and Sikkim, and gradually brought the two countries into its Tibet invasion strategies through armed incursion, financial corruption and coercion. In face of the British hegemony, both the Kings of Bhutan and Sikkim asked help from the Qing government and the High Commissioners, seeking political protection. They also sent letters to the Tibetan officials, reminding of Britain’s ambitions towards Tibet. But neither the requests nor the reminding had ever drawn the attention of the Qing government or the Tibetan government. When the British invaders set foot on the territory of Tibet, the Tibetan government had long ago lost the strategic opportunity to get support from the neighboring countries, failing to take advantage of the long-standing close suzerain-vassal relations to form close military alliance with the traditional allies in the neighborhood to fight against the British intrusion. Instead, with the great despair of being aggressed and trampled by the British, the traditional allies were gradually drawn close to the British-Indian government (Zha, 2009) and eventually fell into the subsidiary countries of the British Empire, becoming the accessories of the Great Britain to invade Tibet and even the forefront to carry out the imperialists’ scheme of “Tibetan separatism”.

4.5 The Anglomaniacs in the Tibetan Upper Class Were the Direct Manipulating Forces Misleading the Dalai Lama Into the Trap of “Tibet Separatism” Astray

In spite of the failure of the two anti-British wars, the Tibetans resolute and unflinching resistance had given a heavy blow to the British invaders. With indomitable fighting spirit, the Tibetans bravely confronted the British troops with modern equipment despite the backward weapons, preventing and deferring the British marching to the inland of Tibet to the utmost. When stationing in Lhasa, given the boycott and repulsion of the local residents, the British realized that they could never conquer the snowy plateau by mere military forces. From then on, Britain gave up the bald-faced direct armed incursion and resorted to political conspiracy to aggress upon Tibet. The experienced colonialist Bell even put it bluntly, “The friendly acts towards the Dalai Lama will be rewarded a hundred times in the whole territory of Tibet.”(Bell, 1985, p.88) The British took advantage of the perplexity of the 13th Dalai Lama while he sought help everywhere for nothing, and tried to befriend him with its ulterior intention. While Dalai Lama was in India, the British tried every means to inculcate the modern civilization under the supervision of the British-Indian government. When Dalai Lama

returned to Tibet, the British provided strong support for his New Deal reform, receiving and training Tibetan students to pursue his reformation. Besides, knowing Dalai Lama’s ideal to develop a prosperous Tibet, the British zealously disseminated the western political thoughts, even training army and police for Tibet. In addition, through the dispatch of spies and bribery of the Tibetan feudal aristocracy, and under the guise of trade, the British actively cultivated pro-British forces in the ruling class of Tibet. Meanwhile, they made an issue of China’s “suzerainty” and “sovereignty” over Tibet in the international community. Availing of Dalai Lama’s depression and aspiration for reform, the British instigated the Tibetans to revolt against the central government under the banner of strengthening friendship between Britain and Tibet, attempting to separate Tibet from China and turn Tibet into a vassal of the British Empire. As this kind of indirect aggression and political penetration were more subtle and difficult to be detected, finally the Dalai Lama was induced to go from hovering to straying until stepping onto the way of “Tibetan separatism”, increasingly deviating from the central government of China.

4.6 Britain Created the World Opinion of “Tibet Independence” With its Cultural Hegemony

Ever since the first British George Bogle stepped onto the land of Tibet, Britain began its propaganda in the international community about the image of Tibet as an isolated and independent state. Through the photos and various literature works, Britain tried to demonstrate Tibet to the world as an untouched and mysterious area with distinctive religion and culture, completely different from the other part of China. Several Englishmen who had participated in the second invasion published books describing their experiences in Tibet, serving for the political strategies of the British government, such as the commander Francis Younghusband’s *India and Tibet, A History of the Relations which have Subsisted between the Two Countries from the Time of Warren Hastings to 1910; With A Particular Account of the Mission to Lhasa of 1904* (1910) and *The Light of Experience --- A Review of Some Men and Events of My Time* (1927), the scholar Laurence Austine Waddell’s *Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology and in Its Relation to Indian Buddhism* (1895), *Among the Himalayas*(1899), and *Lhasa and Its Mysteries: With A Record of the Expedition of 1903-1904* (1905), the journalist of *Daily Mail* Edmund Candler’s *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (1905), and the reporter of the *Times* Perceval Landon’s *The Opening of Tibet, An Account of Lhasa and the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English Government in the Year of 1903-1904* (1906). All through these books and the official documents of the British government, there never appeared the diction of

"invasion". Instead, the second invasion was embellished as "the British Expedition" or "the Younghusband Mission" and the brag about the benevolence of the British army to the Tibetans and the smear of the cruelty of the Chinese government to the Tibetans could be seen between the lines. With these books and some other successive literary output even novels, Tibet gradually came into the sight of the westerners under the manipulation of Britain. The ultimate purpose was to create the political image of Tibet as "an independent, powerful and integrate national state, a friendly neighbor of India" (McKay, 1997, p.208). After the second invasion, Britain further began the wordplay of "suzerainty" and "sovereignty" under the proposal of the British Viceroy of India Curzon. Since the main source of the information about Tibet at that time --- British India was under the control of Britain, with its strong political influence and discourse power, Britain conveyed the information either authentic or illusory to the world in accordance with its own political demand, affecting the cognition towards Tibet of the rest of the world over the following 100 years.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the international "Tibetan separatism" forces still stir up trouble from time to time with the support of the western power, bringing baneful influences in the international community. Looking back at the British invasions which happened about a hundred years ago and exploring how the "Tibet separatism" came into being may bring us some enlightenment to deal with today's so-called "Tibet separatism".

Firstly, ever since the ancient time, Tibet has been an inalienable part of China. It is the basic responsibility and sacred mission for Chinese of all ethnic groups to recognize the wild ambition of the western anti-China forces, resist the unjust and distorted advertisement of the western media, take the initiative to show the image of Tibet to the world, and publicize and safeguard the national unity and the territorial integrity. Throughout history, it's not difficult to find that the powerfulness and development of the motherland is the solid backup force for the regional peace and stability in Tibet.

Secondly, it is the top priority at present to accelerate the construction in Tibet so as to show the world a harmonious and prosperous Tibet under the correct leadership of the Chinese government. During the construction process, the religious beliefs and customs of the Tibetans should be fully respected, and what's more, the achievement of sustainable development in Tibet should also be taken into full consideration. Under the attentive protection of Chinese government, the intoxicating natural environment and the honest and simple social morality in Tibet are well maintained. How to protect the environment of the pure land and make rational exploitation of the abundant natural resources like

oil, iron or rare metals should be the greatest concern for the future development in Tibet.

Thirdly, enough attention and focus should be put on the strategic situation in Tibet so as to keep alert about the various conspiracies and activities of the separatists. In the west part of China, active defense ought to be taken to guard against any threat from India, and a watchful eye should be kept on the words and deeds of the Dalai separatist clique so as to beware and stifle the wild ambition of the international anti-China forces to covet Tibet through geopolitical advantage. In the east, close attention ought to be attached to the deployment and adjustment of the U.S. "return to Asia" strategy so as to prevent the United States from containing and distracting China with Tibet issue and consequently undermining the status and influence of China in the international community.

Fourthly, the relationship with the 14th Dalai Lama should be carefully pondered and handled. With the collapse of feudal serfdom after the liberation, the privileged class led by the 14th Dalai Lama and other senior monastery had been overthrown. As "Tibet separatism" itself is a term that the Western colonialists and imperialists have fabricated deliberately and elaborated intentionally in modern history, and there never appears the word "independence" in Tibetan language, it is high time to abandon the term "Tibet independence" and characterize the clique of the 14th Dalai Lama as ethnic separatists or even terrorists that threaten the national security and the international environment so as to smash the wild ambition of the international "Tibet independence" group represented by the 14th Dalai Lama. At the same time, active dialogue should also be initiated with Dalai Lama. With the aging of the 14th Dalai Lama, what will stand in front of us inevitably in the future is the issue of looking for the reincarnation. Then, the spiritual pillar of the oversea so-called "Tibet independence" will totally fall apart. Therefore, it's especially urgent right now to grasp the opportunity to communicate with Dalai Lama and deal with the relationship with him sensibly and wisely.

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