by foreigners who have been enthralled or appalled by its religiosity, its mountains or its lack of access. Such practices have long been shown, even before the seminal work of Edward Said, to be a dressing up of the Other for consumption by an acquisitive and more powerful Self. The critics of exoticization did a great deal to show the shabby links of such practices with empire, missionaries and aggressive trade, but their writing was addressed to and about their home audiences. This is not the task of the two writers in this volume. As Shakya once pointed out, the problems of foreign misrepresentation are self-evident to Tibetans, who have no trouble distinguishing others' fantasies from their reality.[1] The issue for Wang and Shakya is Tibet, what happened there, who its inhabitants are, and what they think of what they have experienced.

That perspective has been lacking in the modern discussion about Tibet. In part, this is because it has been a conversation dominated by people external to Tibet—primarily exiles, Chinese, and Westerners. The voices of Tibetans inside Tibet are heard only in snatches and fragments. Even if the Chinese authorities allowed these voices to be fully articulated, which they rarely do, one wonders if they would be listened to. In that absence, Wang and Shakya, in their different ways, struggle to describe the Tibet that is not heard, the all-but-silent character in this triad. In this, they face the difficult intellectual tasks: to present someone else's views and history without appropriating the right to represent them.

Tibet: A half-heard voice

There was a brief period when Tibet was not a largely silent character in the West, one ripe for explanation and

1 See, for example, Tsering Shakya, 'Who are the Prisoners?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 69, no. 1, 2001, pp. 183–9.

representation by exiles, travellers, novelists and invaders. When it was effectively independent, it spoke quite volubly. Or at least one woman did. The first English-language book by a Tibetan, *We Tibetans* (1926), was by a woman from Kham (eastern Tibet), Rinchen Lhamo. Shortly after arriving in London at the beginning of the last century (she had married a British consul stationed in Chongching), she made a forceful declaration of intellectual autonomy:

> I suppose our distant country holds little of interest for your public except for what of the strange can be written about it, and so you get a strange picture of us. The most absurd and the most scandalous things are said about us, and . . . your writers often contradict each other.[2]

Her plea fell on deaf ears, for the exoticization trend was already well established by this time. At the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley Stadium in London in 1924, a group of Tibetans had been presented to the public dressed as lamas doing a 'devil dance', and the following year a group of what the programme described as '*real* lamas' had been brought to London to perform at a cinema before each showing of a film about Mount Everest, which in turn showed a Tibetan eating lice.[3] The Tibetan government lodged a formal complaint to the British government, no less voluble than Rinchen Lhamo's, but

2 Rinchen Lhamo King and Louis Magrath King, *We Tibetans: An Intimate Picture, by a Woman of Tibet, of an Interesting and Distinctive People, in which it is Shown how They Live, Their Beliefs, Their Outlook, Their Work and Play, and How They Regard Themselves and Others*, London 1926, p. 95. Cited in Tashi Tsering, *How the Tibetans Have Regarded Themselves Through the Ages*, Dharamsala 1996, p. 3.

3 Peter H. Hansen, 'The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism, and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 101, no. 3, 1996, pp. 712–747.

it was dismissed. 'The weird and fantastic music will convey to the people in England a feeling of the mysticism and romance of Tibet', the programme declared. Since then, much of the foreign literature about Tibet, even that written by Tibetans in English, has been more about the strange or the scandalous, the pitiful or the victimized, than about Tibet's own history.

In the last hundred years, that history has been a story of violence, brutality and forced change. The twentieth century began with a British army invading Tibet from the south on a pretext in 1903, mowing down with machine-gunfire some 3,000 Tibetans armed with matchlock guns, and forcing the Tibetan government to a humiliating surrender. This invasion, politely called an 'expedition' by London, succeeded in turning Tibet into a major security concern for Beijing. In 1910, the Manchu Emperors in Beijing dispatched an army to Lhasa to turn Tibet into a Chinese province, lest it again be used by London or Delhi as a back door from which to threaten China.

A year later, the Xinhai revolution led to the fall of the imperial dynasty in Beijing, and the Manchu troops were soon driven out of Tibet by the Tibetan army. The thirteenth Dalai Lama, whose predecessors or their regents had ruled Tibet since 1642 from the Potala Palace in Lhasa, issued a proclamation that Tibet was no longer under Chinese rule, if it ever had been: the relationship between Tibet and China 'had not been based on the subordination of one to the other', he declared.[4] Tibet remained effectively independent for some thirty years, during which it hosted diplomatic missions from Nepal, Sikkim, Britain and later India, though it never succeeded in obtaining formal recognition of its independence from any major powers. The

4 'Proclamation Issued by H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama on the Eighth Day of the First Month of the Water-Ox Year (1913)', in International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet, *Legal Materials on Tibet*, Berkeley 1997, p. 106.

nationalist government in China did not give up its claim to Tibet, but, preoccupied by resistance to the Japanese invasion and, later, civil war with the Communists, could do little to enforce it.

That changed in 1949 with the rise of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their founding of the People's Republic. This freed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to complete the task that the Manchus had begun. In October 1950, the PLA crossed into Tibet and within a week defeated the small Tibetan army. The following year the Tibetan government signed a document of surrender known as the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement', accepting for the first time that Tibet was part of China. Once the Tibetan leaders had acquiesced to being a part of 'the big family of nationalities of the People's Republic', Mao had no need to impose direct rule on Tibet, declaring instead that the Dalai Lama could continue to run the government and that religion and society should function as before. At the same time, a shadowy Party command unit known as the Tibet Work Committee was set up in Lhasa to oversee all affairs, run by Chinese generals and backed by a large military presence, while roads were being built, cadres recruited and translations of Maoist texts prepared.

No social changes were imposed in Lhasa at that time, but in eastern Tibet aggressive social reforms, land distribution and the destruction of monasteries began in 1955. Resistance armies were formed by local merchants and running battles ensued with the PLA. Refugees from the conflict fled in their thousands to Lhasa, leading to the watershed events of March 1959, when tens of thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Dalai Lama's palace to prevent him visiting the Chinese military camp, where they feared he would be abducted. The battles that followed in Lhasa are now seen by many or most Tibetans as a popular

uprising in defence of the nation against a foreign occupier, and by Chinese officials as an armed rebellion instigated by the Tibetan upper classes with the secret support of the hostile foreign forces—meaning the Americans and the CIA. In any event, the 1959 uprising failed and led the Dalai Lama and 80,000 followers to flee across the Himalayas to India, where they still remain, with an exile government established in the small hill station of Dharamsala in the northwestern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

At this point, the place called Tibet becomes lost as a distinctive voice and player in its own history. The region was isolated from the outside world, indigenous leadership was suppressed, and all media rigidly managed from Beijing—features which in substance have changed rather little in fifty years. What we know of subsequent popular opinion or of the new Tibetan leaders comes on the one hand from official announcements by or through the Chinese state, and on the other, piecemeal accounts gathered by outsiders—reports by refugees, messages smuggled to exile relatives, veiled writings, individual outbursts, interpretations of unrest or occasional encounters with visitors. Tibet becomes a muffled, incoherent voice and in its place a battle takes place to represent it, continuing till today.

The early work of Wang Lixiong and Tsering Shakya emerged out of that battle, and traces of it can be seen in the initial debate between them. But they rapidly became the leading figures among those who try, by understanding the intricacies of representational conflict, to navigate beyond it. Their objective has been the attempt to piece together the likely profile of that fragmented voice, to construct soundly-based and finely-tuned generalizations about Tibetan opinion and experience. To do this, they have tried to set the commonly expressed disputes over

Tibetan history and politics within what each one sees as the proper context—as defined by Tibetans rather than outsiders.

Those disputes consist of a series of passionately held disagreements between the main parties in the conflict. In these disputes the facts used by either side are generally correct, in the sense that something of the sort occurred. But their significance and nature are bitterly contested, as are the words used to describe each event or fact. The most prominent element of the conventional dispute is that of political status. The Chinese side sees Tibet as having been for centuries an integral part of China. Since at least the 1970s, Beijing has dated this incorporation to the thirteenth century, when Tibet became a part of the Mongol empire. From the early eighteenth century, imperial Ambans or Commissioners had been stationed by Beijing in Lhasa; their task, according to this view, was to oversee the Tibetan government on behalf of the Emperor. Beijing's actions in 1950 were thus those of a central government which was simply regularizing its authority over what it termed 'the Tibetan local government'. From a Tibetan perspective, Tibet's relations had been with the Mongol or the Manchu Emperors, not with China as a state or with their successor regimes, and it had therefore become fully independent in 1913. The Ambans in this account had indeed been representatives of the Emperor but had not been superior to the Tibetan government. The events of 1950 were therefore an invasion.

There is a similar disagreement over the question of Tibetan territory. Just over 50% of what is now some 5.7 million Tibetans live in the eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, in the mountainous parts of western Sichuan, northern Yunnan, southern and western Qinghai and southern Gansu—areas usually known in Tibetan as Kham and Amdo. The population in those areas was almost exclusively Tibetan in the 1950s. To

a contemporary Tibetan, all these regions constitute Tibet, as evidenced by the fact that all these areas fought together in the various anti-Chinese resistance movements of the 1950s, in which thousands of Tibetans from all areas died. But, though the Tibetan army had briefly recovered some of these eastern domains in the early twentieth century, most of these areas had not been ruled by the Dalai Lama's government for decades, if not centuries. So in Chinese usage, both official and popular, the word Tibet, or *Xizang* in Chinese, refers only to the domains ruled directly by the Dalai Lama's government in 1949, namely the western and central parts of the Tibetan plateau. Only that Tibet had been covered by the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 1951.

The immediate consequences of the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959 are similarly contested. According to the Chinese narrative, the rebellion was routed by the PLA and, to the relief of the common people of Tibet, the perpetrators and their supporters were 'eliminated' or 'suppressed', to use the official jargon of the time. The suppression of the rebels was accompanied by 'democratic reform', meaning that slavery, serfdom and debt-bondage were annulled and land distributed to the peasants amid great celebration. There was no attack on religion or customs at this time, and in 1965, according to this account, the Tibetan people (a phrase which at that time referred in Tibet to the farmers and nomads) were made 'masters of their own affairs' by the establishment of what was called 'nationality regional autonomy' in Tibet, henceforth to be known as the Tibet Autonomous Region or TAR, with a Tibetan as its governor.

According to the Tibetan or exile view, the 1959 uprising was followed immediately by an orgy of persecution, mass arrests and killings. Forced collectivization and the establishment of communes began within a year or two, taking back the

individual land-holdings that had been given to the peasants in 1959. Attacks on religion and on monasteries also began at around this time. At least four years before the Cultural Revolution began, most monasteries had been closed down and most monks had been forcibly defrocked. Persecution of former lamas and officials was widespread from at least 1964; the nine-week struggle session that autumn against the Panchen Lama, the most important figure to have remained in Tibet after 1959, was the most striking and appalling example of already rampant persecution. This situation continued more or less unabated until the end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao in 1976.

Another fundamental cleavage of views concerns the events of the late 1960s and 1970s. Underlying this is the question of whether those events are still the responsibility of the present leadership. The official Chinese explanation is that what was called retrospectively 'the Cultural Revolution' took place from 1966–76, during which time there were many savage, unjustified attacks on religion, learning, culture and people who were not members of the revolutionary classes. These illegal and regrettable events occurred throughout China, were later declared to have been an error, and were a result of a coup by 'ultra-leftists', for which the members of the 'Gang of Four' were duly sentenced and punished in 1981. These events were not aimed particularly at Tibetans, since people in every area in China suffered to a similar degree. They were carried out by people of all nationalities, including Tibetans, against certain social classes, not against any ethnic group. The subsequent leadership in effect apologized to the nation, and a specific apology was made to Tibetans in 1980. Followers of this view speak as if a new Party and a new Chinese government emerged in 1979 or 1980, with no responsibility for the previous era.

A general Tibetan, if not Western, version can be characterized as maintaining that, whatever its nature within China, in Tibet the Cultural Revolution was an attempt led by Chinese political activists to eliminate Tibetan culture and religion. In this view, it was thus seen as a form of ethnocide. It began in its essential features soon after 1959, and in some respects, elements of it have recurred repeatedly since that time or have never completely ceased. In this view, the CCP that was responsible for the persecutions of the 1950s was in its main features the same as the one that carried out the Cultural Revolution and the one that is still in power, albeit under a rubric of modernization rather than socialist revolution.

In the post-Mao era, the arguments accumulate but become more detailed. By 1979, Deng Xiaoping and later Hu Yaobang had succeeded in routing the immediate followers of Mao, the 'Gang of Four', and had introduced the household responsibility system throughout China, allowing something like a private economy again. They also believed in the celebration of cultural difference among the non-Chinese nationalities, and so envisaged China as a 'multi-national state' (the word 'national' in this case means nationality or ethnicity), in which certain religions, to some extent, could be freely practised. Buddhism was one of these permitted religions. Additionally, they opened the country up to foreign trade and cultural interaction, and in areas like Tibet they invested vast amounts of money in the form of subsidies or infrastructural development.

No one disputes the visible evidence of modernization in Tibetan towns, as in other areas of China, and the striking increase in wealth, especially in the urban areas. But there is bitter antagonism over the intentions behind these policies, or over their effects. One side sees the investment as a kind of cultural levelling, eroding Tibetan language and culture; the other sees

it as beneficial modernization that is an overall advantage to Tibetans. The increase in Chinese migration to Tibetan areas is seen by one side as reducing Tibetans to a dispossessed minority and by the other as helping boost the market economy and prosperity by encouraging competition. In extreme cases, Tibetan exiles use the term 'cultural genocide' to describe what from another perspective is said to be no more than the normal changes that take place to traditional practices under conditions of modernization. Similarly, the Chinese government claims that its autonomy system gives Tibetans control over local affairs, while others say that this is a fiction applicable only to the local government, if that, and then only through puppet appointees, when in fact it is ethnic Chinese officials in the local Party apparatus who run Tibet. When there are Tibetan protests against Chinese rule, the Chinese government and its supporters typically depict them as instigations by exiles and 'hostile foreign forces', while others see them as expressing the fundamental opposition of the Tibetan people to Chinese rule.

A similar dispute surrounds recent Chinese policies in Tibet, which, perhaps as a response to the fall of the Soviet Union, attributed by Chinese analysts to its laxity with nationalities, had become much more aggressive in the 1990s. Major policy changes had been imposed at a meeting in 1994, called the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet, which had ended the 1980s dispensation whereby Tibetans were free to worship the Dalai Lama. It also banned his photographs, forced monks and nuns to denounce him in writing, fixed the number of monks and nuns in each monastery, encouraged retired Chinese soldiers to settle in Tibet, ended plans for Tibetan-language education in TAR middle schools, and led to rules forbidding Tibetan students and Tibetans in government jobs from any religious practice. To China, these moves were seen as acceptable steps that were

necessary to staunch the growth of Tibetan nationalism. But to others they were seen as a fundamental attack on Tibetan culture and religion.

Such differences can be listed indefinitely, down to the level of the individual word. The word 'country', for example, antagonizes Chinese if used of Tibet, who see this as a claim for the independence of what they term a 'region' or an 'area'. Similar tensions surround words like 'invasion' or 'occupation', let alone saying 'Tibet and China' instead of 'Tibet in China'. As I have mentioned, Tibet (*Xizang*) refers to the western half of the Tibetan plateau in Chinese usage, but sometimes the entire plateau when used by others. Political terminology inevitably has many problems. The word 'propaganda' (*xuanchuan*) means manipulative information to Westerners, but to older Chinese people simply describes distributed information, without any negative connotations. A 'cadre' (*ganbu*) means to Westerners an official in a Communist Party, but in China it describes any employee of the state, whatever job they do. Conversely, 'the government' (*zhengfu*) sounds to Westerners like the supreme entity that runs a country, but in China it describes only the administrative officers who carry out the instructions of the Party leaders and committees positioned within each office and department. Chinese people use the relatively new term 'Han' to refer to the ethnic Chinese, and nowadays see the standard English use of the term 'Chinese' for that function as a deliberate insinuation that Tibetans, Mongols, Uyghurs and other nationalities within China are not Chinese too. That term, 'nationality', was used by China to translate the Chinese word *minzu* until the 1990s and continues to be used that way by foreigners, but is now no longer permitted among Chinese officials, who instead have to use the term 'ethnic' or 'ethnicity', apparently to avoid any implication that a

nationality might be entitled to a state. In religion, many words lead to misunderstandings. The word 'lama' is used in Chinese to refer to any Tibetan Buddhist monk, whereas in Tibetan and in Western usage it refers only to a highly revered teacher. The term 'Living Buddha' (*huofo*) is common in Chinese as a translation for the Tibetan term *trulku* or *tulku* (written as *sprul sku* in Tibetan), which means a reincarnated lama and has nothing specifically to do with living Buddhas, a concept that is not found in Tibetan Buddhism. Westerners use the titles of Tibetan lamas, but Chinese government officials only use their given names, or their titles in truncated form, such as 'Dalai' instead of 'Dalai Lama'. Mutual incomprehension and sensitivity is rife at every level of discussion of the Tibet issue.

Attempts at talks

Surprisingly, some points of agreement can be made out, though they are rarely emphasized. All parties to the China-Tibet dispute more or less agree that the Cultural Revolution was a disaster on a massive scale, but differ on whether it has been correctly explained, sufficiently amended for, or even stopped. There is broad consensus that Tibet is not simply another Chinese province and has special characteristics—during the 1980s, that was the term, *tese*, used by Chinese leaders to describe Tibetan and other nationality entities—and so is entitled to a different, devolved form of administration compared to the inland provinces of China. No one except extreme leftists disputes the benefit of Deng Xiaoping's policies in the early 1980s, when economic liberalization, opening up and some tolerance of religion were introduced. There is also broad agreement that there was or is something magnificent and valuable about Tibetan culture, and by the 1990s many Chinese,

particularly from affluent sectors of society, had come to see the Tibetan landscape as a spiritual resource, and even to turn to Tibetan religion and Tibetan lamas as a source of spiritual 'purity'. Both sides talk about 'preserving' Tibetan culture and environment, as though these were museum specimens, though they differ sharply in how this should be done and who has the right to do it. And all agree that economic improvement in society, plus increases in social welfare, infrastructure and modernization, are a benefit, though not at any cost.

The consensus over these issues was broad enough in the early 1980s for contacts to resume between Beijing and the exiles for the first time since 1959. Deng Xiaoping met with the Dalai Lama's older brother, Gyalo Thondup, in March 1979 and promised concessions, provided the exiles agreed not to ask for independence. This condition was accepted, and three exile fact-finding delegations were allowed to visit Tibet in 1979 and 1980, discovering extraordinary depths of poverty in Tibet and widespread devotion to the Dalai Lama. In 1982 and 1984 two rounds of 'exploratory talks' took place between the Chinese and the exiles. Their content has never been publicized, but they broke down by 1985, with China declaring that it would only consider discussion of the Dalai Lama's personal terms of return, and not any changes to its policies in Tibet.

Two years later, the exile leadership 'was left with only one option' as it saw it, which was 'to appeal directly for the assistance of the international community'. In September 1987, at the Capitol in Washington, DC, the Dalai Lama gave his first political speech abroad, seeking Western support. In this speech and at the European Parliament in Strasbourg the following year, he presented the issue in terms of human rights abuses and environmental damage. He did not call for independence and asked China in return to make all the Tibetan regions a 'self-

governing democratic political entity'. In the face of strong resistance from Beijing, he later withdrew this request and asked instead for 'genuine autonomy' or 'meaningful autonomy', adding under further pressure in 2008 that this should be allowed by the Chinese constitution. This approach attracted support from several major Western governments.

Some fifteen years later, in 2002, after much international pressure, talks finally began again. Eight rounds of discussions took place between the two sides, but reached stalemate in October 2008, when each side publicly accused the other of insincerity. The exiles said that Beijing had no intention of making any progress on talks and was waiting only for the Dalai Lama to die, believing that the movement will then collapse. The Chinese side insisted that the exiles were lying, secretly plotting independence, planning ethnic cleansing and demanding to separate a quarter of China through their plan for a single autonomous region covering the entire Tibetan plateau. The twenty-five years of attempted talks had passed without success; indeed, relations had sharply deteriorated.

Essentially those talks had taken place between two outside bodies, Chinese and exile, under foreign pressure, concerning a mute entity called Tibet that took no part in these discussions. Beijing never suggested bringing local Tibetan representatives to the table with the exiles, and, except for once, did not allow the exile delegates to bring with them any Tibetan refugee who had been brought up within China. But in many ways, the absent partner remained the most forceful presence in these discussions: during two periods in the post-Mao period, Tibetans inside Tibet took to the streets in significant numbers to protest against Chinese rule, and were perhaps the reason that Beijing agreed to talks.

The first wave of protests occurred in Lhasa between 1987 and 1989, when there were four major rallies against Chinese rule, each involving over a thousand laypeople. Between 75 and 150 Tibetans were shot dead by paramilitary troops during these protests, two of which ended in rioting. In March 1989 the army was sent in to impose martial law on Lhasa, remaining on the streets for thirteen months. Some 200 smaller protests were staged by monks and nuns in this period and during the following six years. A second phase of protest erupted in March–April 2008, when some 150 protests took place in or near Lhasa and in rural towns and villages of eastern Tibet, including parts of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. At least four of these incidents involved serious rioting. Chinese official reports say nineteen people were killed by protesters in the riot in Lhasa on 14 March 2008, and have said at different times, without giving details, that up to eight protesters died. Exile organizations say that between one and two hundred protesters were killed by security forces or died from abuse in custody. As before, the response by the government was militarization, this time by paramilitary troops rather than the army, in towns across the entire Tibetan plateau rather than just Lhasa. The troops remained on the streets of Lhasa and other areas for at least fifteen months and were still there at the time of writing.

In this sense, a Tibet of some sort had made its voice heard. But what had it said? Some people claimed that the 2008 protests had shown that Tibetans wanted independence, since many protesters waved the Tibetan national flag, which is strictly illegal in China. Numerous protesters carried pictures of the Dalai Lama, leading some to argue that this showed support for his proposals of compromise. Other observers speculated that the protests were about the excessive Chinese policies of the 1990s, which had been applied increasingly to eastern Tibetan

areas as well as to the TAR. On the other hand, Chinese officials and their supporters insisted that the protests were violent and coordinated, and therefore showed deliberate instigation by the Dalai Lama and his followers.

The question of class and benefit

The protests raised a fundamental question, beyond the symbolic disputes over Tibetan independence and the ideological arguments over representation: whether the Tibetan farmers and the nomads, some 85 per cent of the population, had benefited from Chinese rule. China's principal strategy in 1959 had been to win over the Tibetan peasantry with land distribution. That support was squandered through such policies as rushed collectivization, impoverishment and the Cultural Revolution. But in 1980, Beijing dismantled the communes and again distributed land to individual rural households, liberalized the economy and allowed people to practise religion. It also invested huge sums in infrastructure, roads and services in Tibet. Do rural Tibetans see the modernization and the market economy as net advantages, given that some religious practice is now allowed? Or did the Party's heavy-handed attacks on Tibetan nationalism and on the Dalai Lama since the 1990s lose any goodwill it might have acquired from those gifts?

Such questions have received little serious discussion. For decades, Tibet has been treated by intellectuals and policy analysts as something of a sideshow, an arcane conflict between incompatible ideologues, as if it were a political orphan among adult concerns. Much of this disdain can be attributed to discomfort about the popular exoticization of Tibet, its new age devotees, its Cold War antecedents and history of earlier contacts with the CIA, as well as an increasing reluctance to criticize

China or antagonize Beijing. The victimization narrative of the exiles has added, in yet another way, to this marginalization effect. At a deeper level, it reflects a nervousness, particularly on the Left, about religion and populist political movements, and a reluctance to consider those phenomena as worthy of serious political consideration. At the opposite end of the spectrum are commentators who see China as an extreme authoritarian force and regard any pragmatic explanations of its Tibet policies as specious.

But any such diffidence in policy circles has been overtaken by events. The 2008 protests in Tibet were so widespread, both laterally in location and vertically in class, that they triggered a re-militarization by China of the Tibetan plateau, which sits between the three established nuclear powers of Asia. The Tibet issue emerged as one of strategic significance to the region, and not only because it raised doubts about the CCP's claims to legitimacy and nationwide support. In addition, in spring 2009 China claimed great power status, increasing the importance of being able to demonstrate domestic stability and legitimacy. It began a zero tolerance policy towards meetings by foreign leaders with the Dalai Lama, cancelling an EU summit in December 2008 because of a planned meeting with the French president. In March 2009, its foreign minister announced that the issues of Tibet and Taiwan were of 'equal sensitivity' to China.

If anyone was surprised to find the lonely lands near the top of China's list of strategic concerns and attracting international attention, it would not have been Tsering Shakya or Wang Lixiong. They had long predicted, from different vantage points, the seriousness for China of the Tibetan question—as Wang had written in 2002:

> Tibet is more prosperous now than ever before in its history. However, this has not gained the PRC the allegiance of the Tibetans, more and more of whom have become attached to the Dalai Lama . . . In the words of one retired official: 'The current stabilization is only on the surface. One day people will riot in much greater numbers than in the late eighties.'

Both gained their status as interpreters of these events by trying to make sense of the muted Tibet, to find plausible, concrete explanations for Tibetan actions and beliefs. This effort is situated within a view of China which implies that Tibet is not merely an idiosyncratic element among China's many problems but a core issue which shows the workings of the large state and thus has direct implications for its viability as a state. In other words, the Chinese state cannot resolve its key contradictions and become sustainable until it resolves its problems in Tibet.

Wang Lixiong

The Chinese intelligentsia has suffered from a difficult reputation, being divided, factionalized and frequently compromised. The leading Chinese journalist Liu Binyan blamed China's writers and intellectuals for the failure of reform efforts after 1989, describing them as 'a craven intellectual elite that has made a bargain with the regime: political support in exchange for personal privilege. No group has gained as much from the bargain as the literary intellectuals have.'[5]

The writer and essayist Wang Lixiong has increasingly distanced himself from that group. He became famous for the novel *Yellow Peril* (*Huanghuo*, 1991), a futuristic fantasy about

5 Binyan Liu and Eugene Perry Link, *Two kinds of Truth: Stories and Reportage from China*, Bloomington 2006, p. 17.