The Dalai Lama's Non-violence Policy In The Tibet-China Conflict

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama is easily the best known and must loved spiritual leader in the modern world. He is a prime example of Buddhist love and kindness. He was only two years old when he was identified as the reincarnation of the thirteenth Dalia Lama, but wasn't officially named until the age of four and a half. This young Dalai Lama was educated in accordance with the traditional Tibetan Buddhist system, which focuses on developing the mind in such a way to be capable of dealing with any misfortunes. This serenity of mind was put to test by the Chinese invasion and cruelty towards his country.

It was then in 1913 that Tibet reasserted its independence. It acted as an independent state with its own flag, currency, and military. Although China did not recognize their independence as legitimate, claiming Tibet has been a part of China for over 800 years. Therefore, in 1950 China invaded Tibet’s borders. After quickly defeating their small military, Tibet’s newly independent government was forced into the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.” This “agreement” gave China full control over the Tibetan region. However, many countries worldwide do not recognize this agreement under international law as it was signed under coercion due to the thousands of Chinese troops stationed throughout their land with the threat of destruction. On the other hand, China argues that Tibet has been their rightful land for over 800 years when the Yuan dynasty absorbed it. In addition, China argues that they have liberated Tibet and helped free opporessed serfs in the feudal system leaving many grateful for China's intervention.

However, since the Chinese forcefully invaded Tibet in 1950, over 1.6 million people have died and more than 6,000 temples and monasteries have been destroyed as a direct result of Chinese occupation. Most of the death and destruction occurred after the Tibetans Uprising in 1959 and The Cultural Revolution. The uprising occurred due to the oppression but was triggered by the people's fear of a possible Chinese plot to kidnap the Dalai Lama. On March 10th 1959, 300,000 brave men, women, and children, surrounded the Dalai Lama's palace in order to protect him against the Chinese. Within a few days, armed fighting broke out and the Dalai Lama fled to India for protection. More destruction and oppression came during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 as Mao Zendong attempted to assert his authority over Communist China by ridding it of its impurities. These impurities involved the Tibetan people and their religion.

The Chinese began to bomb and strike down on the rebelling people, killing thousands as well as destroying monasteries with only 12 of them still intact by 1980. Ever since then, China has taken control and has been closely monitoring the religious sector. Monks are forced to wear the The Zhongshan suit or Mao suit instead of their traditional robes, buddhist scriptures have been burned and destroyed, and population caps have been set on the few standing monasteries, monks and nuns have been forced into the spotlight saying that Tibet belongs to China and denouncing their loyalty to the Dalai Lama. Years later in 2008, things did not get better as another revolt occurred leaving a few hundred dead and the Chinese government stating that it was an organized attack by the Dalai Lama. However, the Dalai Lama has been an advocate for peace and non-violence as he once stated, “I consider non-violence to be compassion in

action. It doesn't mean weakness, cowering in fear, or simply doing nothing. It is to act without violence, motivated by compassion, recognising the rights of others.” In addition, while in exile, the Dalai Lama has formed a democratic government known as the Central Tibetan Administration formed in 1959. It calls for the “Middle Way Approach" which states that Tibet will remain a part of China but only with more autonomy. Some Tibetans are against this as they wish to continue fighting until complete independence from China, while others accept the Middle Way Approach as it will result in less violence, a core belief within Buddhism.

Today the Dalai Lama remains in exile from his own country as well as more than 125,000 native Tibetans. Their language has been taken from them as now the schools teach in Chinese, the streets are filled with Han Chinese faces, and their religion is being destroyed with the ever changing culture as the Chinese continue to migrate. China believes Tibet needed to be liberated from itself and the only answer was their help. However, by doing so, Tibeten people are being discriminated against in their own country due to their religion and are dying to this day because of it.

It is estimated that at least one million Tibetans died because of this Chinese occupation. In the face of the Chinese military power, the Dalai Lama urged his people away from retaliating in a violent manner. He proclaimed, “Non-violence is the only way. … It's a slower process sometimes, but a very effective one. Practically speaking, through violence we may achieve something, but at the expense of someone else's welfare. That way, although we may solve one problem, we simultaneously seed a new problem. The best way to solve problems is through human understanding, mutual respect. On one side make some concessions; on the other side take serious consideration about the problem. There may not be complete satisfaction, but something happens. At least the future danger is avoided. Non-violence is very safe.”

In lieu of the attack on Tibet, the Dalai Lama began to oppose the Chinese in a non-violent way. He began to help scientists in their research of meditation and other spiritual practices. He also established a government when in exile in India, signifying his undiminished pride in his people. He stepped down from formal leadership in 2011, but is still recognized as the world's moral leaders of our time.