

# Briefing Paper: The issue of a Single Administrative Entity for the Tibetan people as envisaged by the Tibetan Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy



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The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People, submitted by the envoys of the Dalai Lama to their Chinese counterparts at their request in November 2008, seeks to bring together “all the Tibetans currently living in designated Tibetan autonomous areas<sup>1</sup> within a single autonomous administrative unit” to allow “the Tibetan nationality to develop and flourish with its distinct identity, culture and spiritual tradition through the exercise of self-government.”<sup>2</sup>

- The single administrative entity would respect the integrity of the Tibetan people by integrating all existing Tibetan autonomous areas within the PRC into one administrative structure.
- Tibet is traditionally defined by its geography<sup>3</sup>, and the Tibetan identity (language, culture and religion) extends across the Tibetan plateau, as evidenced by modern language maps.<sup>4</sup>
- The Memorandum is a quest for rights, not for territory. It is designed as a policy solution, within the framework of the Chinese constitution.
- China’s Law on Regional National Autonomy (Article 2) provides that “regional autonomy is practiced in areas where *people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities.*”
- In addition to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) established by the PRC government in 1965, most of Qinghai and parts of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces are designated by the PRC government as Tibetan autonomous areas.
- Around half of all Tibetans live in Tibetan autonomous areas outside the TAR, whose 2004 population was put by the PRC government at 2,736,800.
- Implementation of genuine autonomy per the Memorandum would not in any way affect the PRC’s international boundaries or territorial integrity.
- A single administrative entity would require internal administrative adjustments that would not extend beyond areas already designated by the PRC as Tibetan autonomous areas.
- Only by addressing the shared concerns and aspirations of the Tibetan people in all Tibetan autonomous areas can genuine stability and unity of the PRC be achieved, as evidenced by the history of uprisings and demonstrations throughout these areas.

[See supplemental maps >>](#)

<sup>1</sup> Tibet Autonomous Region and, in Gansu Province, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) and Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County (TAC); in Qinghai Province, Haibei TAP, Hainan TAP, Huangnan TAP, Goulou TAP, Yushu TAP, Haixi Mongol and TAP; in Sichuan Province, Aba Qiang and TAP, Ganzi TAP, Muli TAC; and in Yunnan Province, Deqian TAP. (Chinese names used)

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People (<http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=78&articletype=press>)

<sup>3</sup> Tibet has traditionally comprised three main areas: Amdo (northeastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet) and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). The Tibet Autonomous Region was set up by the PRC government in 1965 and covers the area of Tibet west of the Yangtse River, including part of Kham. The rest of Amdo and Kham have been incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan.

<sup>4</sup> See supplemental maps, attached.

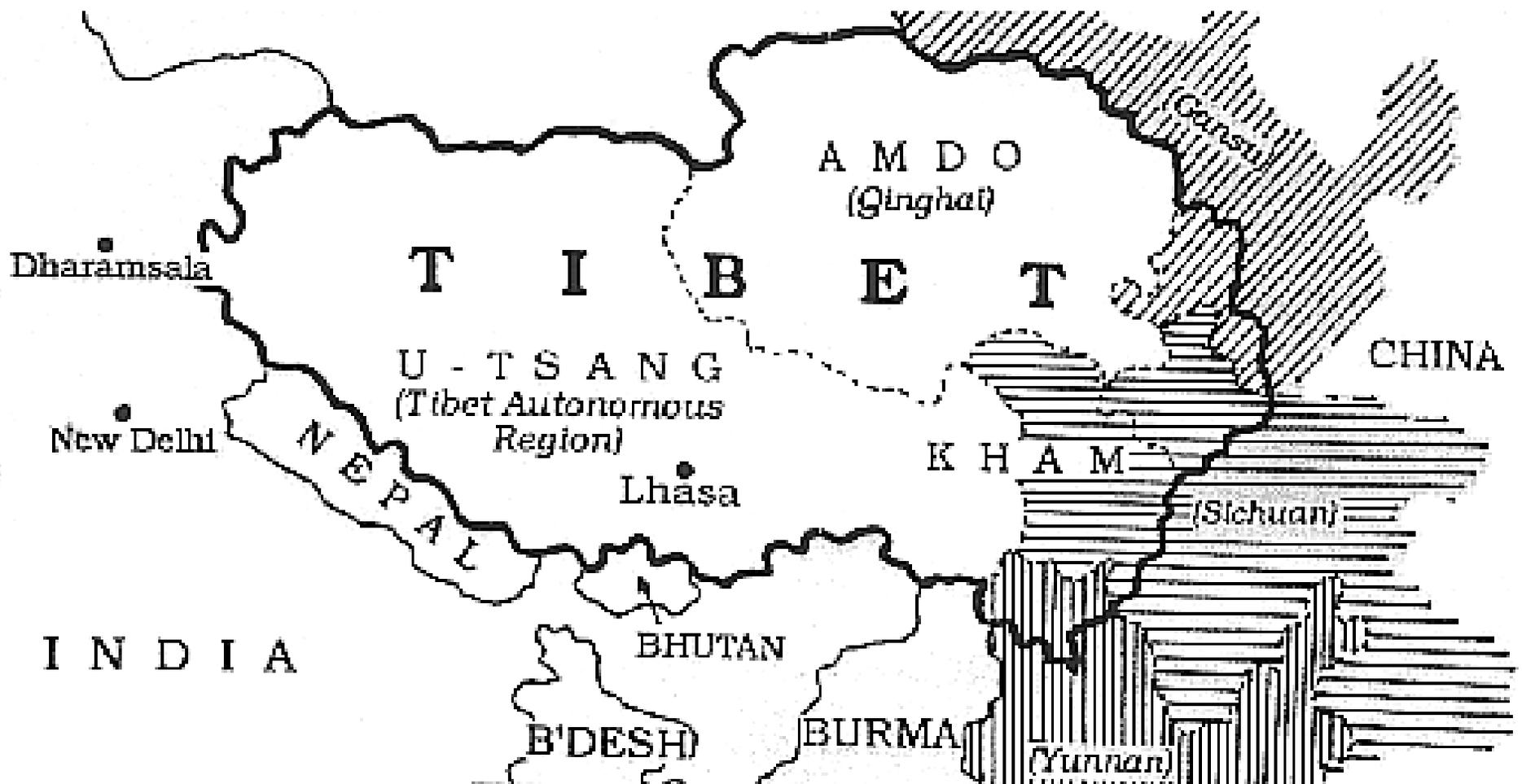
**Map 1: Tibetan language.** This map shows the geographical distribution of the Tibetan language, and thus the domicile of the Tibetan people, across parts of four Chinese provinces as well as the Tibet Autonomous Region (Xizang).

## Chinese Linguistic Groups



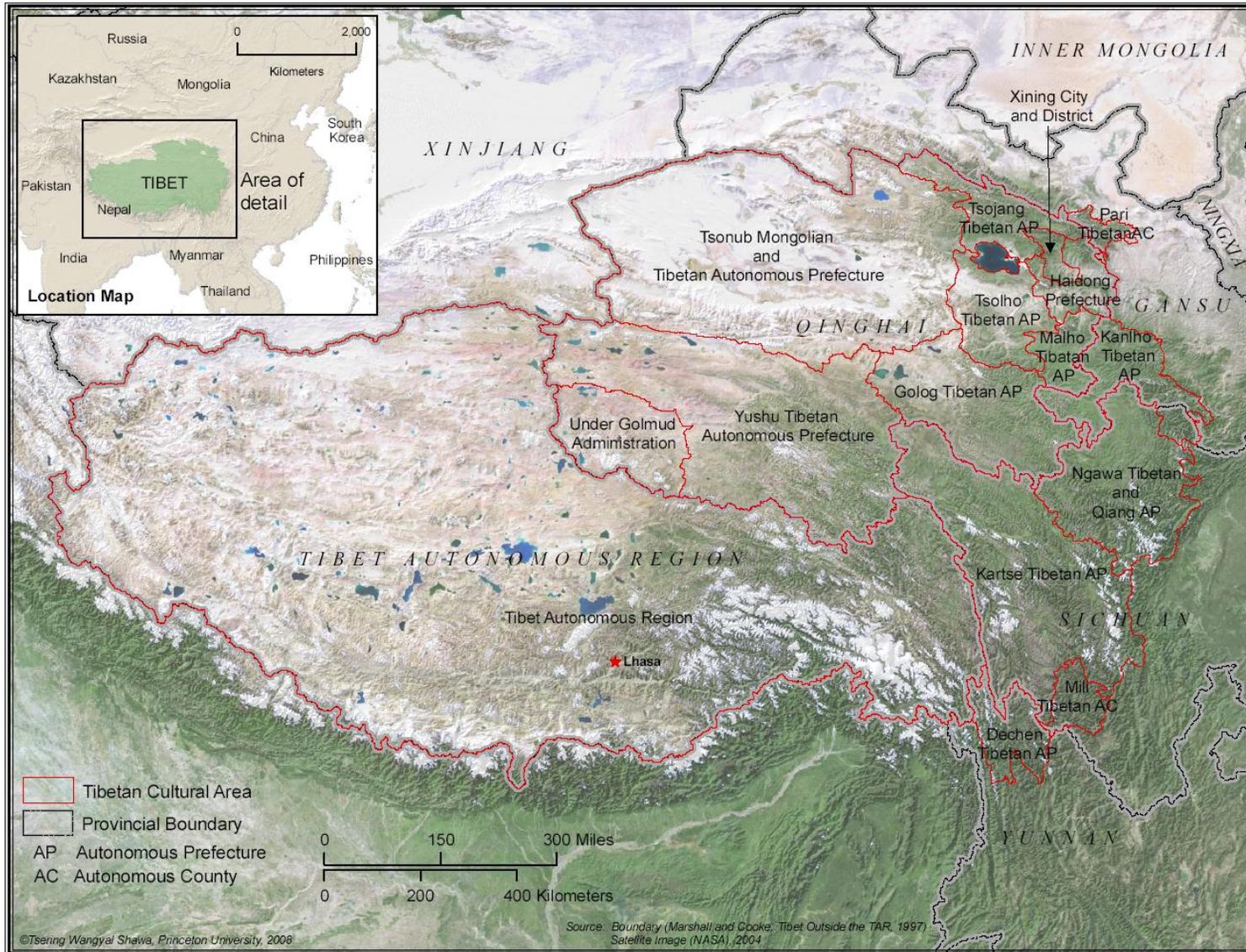
Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 1990, located at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_linguistic\\_map.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China_linguistic_map.jpg)

**Map 2: Historical Tibet:** This map shows the three traditional provinces of Tibet prior to 1951, and how they have been divided by the provincial boundaries of the People's Republic of China: Amdo (most of Qinghai and portions of Gansu and Sichuan), Kham (portions of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and the Tibet Autonomous Region), and U-Tsang (most of the Tibet Autonomous Region).



Source: Central Tibetan Administration, <http://www.tibet.com/glance.html>

**Map 3: Tibetan autonomous jurisdictions.** This map shows that the 13 Tibetan autonomous areas (the Tibetan Autonomous Region and 12 autonomous prefectures and counties in neighboring provinces), as defined by the Chinese political system, are contiguous, are coterminous with the Tibetan plateau, and represent where Tibetans live.



Source: Tsering Wangyal Shawa, Princeton University, 2008

[Note: map uses Tibetan place names. Conversion is as follows (Tibetan-Chinese, where they differ): Tsojong = Haibei; Tsolho = Hainan; Malho = Huangnan; Golog = Goulou; Tsonub = Haixi; Pari = Tianzhu; Ngawa = Aba; Katse = Ganzi; Dechen = Deqian]