

## MASTER'S THESIS

# Analyzing the portrayal of the desired national identity of the Tibetan ethnicity in China's propaganda

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**Analyzing the Portrayal of the Desired National  
Identity of the Tibetan Ethnicity  
in China's Propaganda**

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## ABSTRACT

China's national identity construction toward Tibet is considered to have failed, after the riots in 2008. This research examined the propaganda toward Tibet in the post-1989 period, in the purpose of discovering the problems in national identity construction over the Tibet ethnicity. The problem was explored step by step: 1) identify the patterns of key frames in the post-1989 period; 2) examine whether the propaganda featured multiculturalism, as claimed by China's government; 3) find out if Tibetans were portrayed as in-group members in each dimension of identity constructions; and 4) test if the conceptualized non-positive portrayals were signified in out-group identifications. Applying Matthes & Kohring's (2008) content analysis method and Brady's timeline (2008), 3534 news clips sampled from two mainstream daily newspapers in Tibet, were content analyzed. Results show that during the post-1989 period, the image of China is a nation kept depowering Tibetans in governance. The claimed multiculturalism appeared to be narrowly-defined, which limited in economic development related issues. Results also show that the in-group portrayals of Tibetans on the national level were significantly different with that on the ethnic level in *ethnic identity achievement* and *ethnic behavior practice* dimensions, which are the major parts of the national identity constructions in China's propaganda. Finally, the conceptualized non-positive portrayals were identified and argued that they may induce Tibetans' out-group identifications.

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