



**CONTESTED TERRAIN:
CHINA'S PERIPHERY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN ASIA
A Conference Report by Jacques deLisle**

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“Contested Terrain: China’s Periphery and International Relations in Asia” was the topic of the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s annual Asia Program conference, held in cooperation with the Reserve Officers Association on November 4, 2011, in Washington, D.C. Participants included: Richard Bush (Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Brookings Institution), Allen Carlson (Associate Professor of Government, Cornell University), Michael Davis (Professor of Law, University of Hong Kong), Jacques deLisle, John W. Garver (Professor, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology), Michael Green (Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies and Associate Professor of International Relations, Georgetown University), Scott Kastner (Associate Professor of Government and Politics, University of Maryland), Gilbert Rozman, (FPRI Senior Fellow and Musgrave Professor of Sociology, Princeton University), Sheila Smith (Senior Fellow for Japan Studies, Council on Foreign Relations), Ashley Tellis (Senior Associate, South Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), and Arthur Waldron (FPRI Senior Fellow and Lauder Professor of International Relations, University of Pennsylvania).

Articles based on several of the presentations at the conference will appear in the Summer 2012 issue of Orbis. For other FPRI essays by Jacques deLisle, visit: <http://www.fpri.org/byauthor.html#delisle>

A U.S. GRAND STRATEGY FOR ASIA AND CHINA’S PERIPHERY

Michael Green examined United States policy toward the region along China’s continental and maritime periphery, outlining an American grand strategy that addresses China, the other states in the region and the complex and sometimes troubled relationships between China and its neighbors. Green reviewed three models for a regional order. First, U.S.-led unipolarity is the model the U.S. pursued in the early part of the 1990s, but it is not viable today. The approach produced significant resistance at the time, ranging from soft counterbalancing by regional states to more full-blown blowback, especially in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis when the U.S. supported a Washington Consensus-style approach and regional actors responded with the Chiang Mai initiative, ASEAN-plus-3 and other measures to reduce U.S. influence. Green suggested that there are potentially lessons here for a rising China.

Second, a return to Sinocentric unipolarity. Evocative of the old tribute system, this holds some appeal for China, but it too is not feasible. The idea that China could be a benign regional hegemon was reflected in the Jiang Zemin-era notion of China’s peaceful rise and the Hu Jintao-era ideas of peaceful development and a harmonious world. The model also fits with China’s self-image as a stalwart proponent of non-interference in other states’ internal affairs (in contrast with the U.S.’s approach) and its reliance on economic ties as the foundation of its regional relations. Despite its economic prowess, China is no longer the center of its world. Instead, China is enmeshed in an international economic system in which supply chains are truly global and capital flows in Asia are more extra-regional than intra-regional. Moreover, the states along China’s periphery are averse to a new Sinocentric order. Their modern nationalism rejects quasi-tributary relations. Some remember a bitter history of China’s use of force. Some have unresolved territorial disputes with China. Many distrust Beijing’s agenda for the future.

Third, a bipolar order steered by a U.S.-China condominium. This model is reflected in talk of a “G-2” and, more broadly, the long-standing U.S. policy of engagement with China that seeks to socialize China, making it into a normal power that can be incorporated into something resembling a concert of powers. This approach seemed to offer a means for the U.S. to

accommodate a rising China, much as Washington had sought—initially and often unsuccessfully—to handle rising powers in the twentieth century. But U.S. policy, especially notably in recent years, has also included significant elements of hedging and balancing a rising China. Examples include George W. Bush’s opening to India and the Barack Obama administration’s toughened stance on South China Sea issues. A G-2-type arrangement also would require that China be willing to share major international responsibilities, which Beijing has not been prepared to do. It also ill-fits with Asia’s generally multipolar structure (given India’s rise and Japan’s persistence as major powers) and with a rich tradition of U.S. thought on strategic relations in Asia, which has tended to be multipolar and to emphasize alliances and influence along the Asian rimland as a means to manage continental powers in Asia.

Green urged a fourth approach to guide U.S. strategy toward China and the region along China’s periphery—one that engages and seeks to shape China, pays attention to the region as a whole, does not overplay the U.S.’s limited hand with Asian states, appreciates the security dilemma the U.S. faces with China, understands the importance of multiple resources, emphasizes positive values, and recognizes multipolarity and the virtues of multilateralism. In terms of resources, the U.S. should attend to: the military balance of power (which has been made more difficult by impending budget cuts and deeper concerns triggered by the 2011 federal budget impasse, but which has been potentially partly redressed by the wisely increased—although badly presented—reemphasis on/pivot to East Asia in U.S. defense policy); the economic balance of power (which depends on the U.S. improving its own economy and supporting an open international economic order); and an ideational balance of power (which is an area of relative U.S. strength, vis-à-vis China, given China’s relatively weak soft power). In terms of “positive values,” the U.S. should emphasize promotion of economic cooperation, good governance, human rights, free and fair elections and the like. If the U.S. treads too heavily here, it risks pushback from regional states that are generally closer to Beijing than to Washington in their views about “interference” in other states’ “internal affairs.”

U.S. multilateralism and emphasis on multipolarity will hardly assuage China’s concerns about what China sees as a U.S. containment strategy, but they are better for U.S. goals than a perception that Washington pursues unipolar dominance. A multipolar perspective fits with the mixture of cooperation and competition that will characterize U.S. relations with China generally and in the context of complicated relations along China’s periphery. It also will support the U.S.’s understanding that getting Asia policy right and getting China policy right are interdependent goals. It can underpin appropriate policies of complex, multifaceted and multi-layered engagement with China’s neighbors. Examples of this complexity include the coexistence of APEC, the East Asian Summit, the pursuit of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and U.S.-regional state bilateral and “minilateral” engagement. Multilateralism and an emphasis on multipolarity also would be consistent with policies that addresses effectively the complexity and diversity of regional actors’ political orders (ranging from consolidated democracies, to transitional states, to authoritarian regimes, to peoples who lack their own governments but seek greater autonomy), their agendas in relations with the U.S. (ranging from Japan’s interest in a strong U.S. presence to several Southeast Asian states’ pursuit of “just enough” U.S. involvement), and their formal relations with the United States (ranging from treaty allies such as Japan, Korea and Australia, to others with long-standing or recently strengthening but less formal ties, to until-recently-pariah states such as Burma, to ethnic groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs that straddle China’s borders).

TROUBLED WATERS: CHINA AND ITS MARITIME PERIPHERY—JAPAN, THE SOUTH CHINA SEA STATES AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

Sheila Smith focused on the September 2010 incident involving a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japan Coast Guard vessels in disputed waters as a significant and revealing moment in the troubled relations between Japan and China, particularly over their maritime boundary, during a period of rising Chinese power. The incident, which began when the Chinese ship refused an order to stop for inspection and led to a collision and Japan’s taking the Chinese captain and crew into custody, illustrated broader risks and problems. First, the tension quickly escalated because it was entwined with the two states’ rival claims to the Senkaku / Diaoyutai Islands, near which the initial encounter occurred. Japan initially treated the matter as a question of domestic law enforcement, charging the Chinese captain with obstructing Japanese officers in performing their duties in Japanese territory. China’s contrary view about rights over the area fueled a sharp escalation of the dispute, including detention of Japanese citizens for allegedly entering a restricted zone in China, and suspension of exports of rare earth (vital for Japan’s electronics industries). The U.S. signaled its support for Japan, with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offering assurances that the bilateral security treaty extended to the Senkaku Islands and nearby waters. With the international crisis intensifying, Japanese prosecutors dropped the case, citing its diplomatic impact.

The incident occurred against the backdrop of long-troubled relations over the East China Sea. In the early Postwar decades, disagreement over fishing rights had been a relatively minor source of friction. Disputes over oil and gas resources emerged as an issue in the 1970s and sharpened as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) established a firmer basis for claims to the economic resources around islands that are territories of a particular state, and established new processes for maritime boundary delimitation. Tensions escalated in the 1990s and 2000s over the disputed maritime border as anti-Japanese nationalism surged in China and China intensified its exploration of, and claims to, offshore oil and gas resources. With the broader relationship chilled by the dispute over Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine (honoring Japanese war dead, including some war criminals from the Second World War), Prime Minister Abe sought to improve bilateral relations, and made a cooperative approach to the East China Sea a centerpiece of this effort. In 2006, China and

Japan agreed to pursue cooperative development of hydrocarbon resources in the area. But such progress has proved fragile. The September 2010 confrontation involving the Chinese fishing trawler was the most recent among many developments that have fostered or reflected Japan's growing security concerns about a rising China. Others include the 2004 mobilization of the Japanese naval self-defense force in response to a Chinese submarine's entering waters near Japan, the prominence of "southwest" and Taiwan contingencies—along with the North Korea threat—in Japan's post-Cold War force posture decisions, and moves in 2011 to increase surveillance directed largely at Chinese naval activities in the seas between the two countries.

The handling of the fishing boat case seriously damaged the Japanese public's confidence in the government's ability to cope with foreign policy challenges, particularly those stemming from an ascendant China. The government faced criticism for backing down and releasing the Chinese captain, for failing to release a video showing the Chinese ship's provocative behavior and, worse yet, for considering punishment of the coast guard officer who publicly released the embargoed video. Nationalist sentiments in Japan, colliding with rising nationalism in China, make it more likely that future incidents could bring tit-for-tat reactions.

The incident showed a heightened tendency toward sharper confrontation in bilateral relations. It showed a fraying of prior commitments to setting aside the territorial dispute over the Senkakus in the interest of broader economic and regional relations. It showed a tougher, more assertive Chinese reaction to Japanese behavior that, in the past, had brought a more muted response. With no subsequent measures to improve crisis management mechanisms and a trend toward denser interactions between a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force focused on China-related contingencies and a Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy venturing more frequently beyond coastal waters and seemingly increasingly interested in testing Japan, the potential for escalation from incident to crisis is troublingly high. Smith noted four scenarios for a possible clash: a reprise of the September 2010 incident, with a small encounter with a civilian vessel devolving into a larger confrontation; a miscalculation at sea arising from the increased contacts between the two navies, leading to escalation; a confrontation rooted outside the bilateral relationship, such as a crisis over the Taiwan Strait or North Korea, which would involve the United States as well; or (least likely but potentially most devastating for Japan), a Chinese move to occupy Japanese-claimed islands in the East China Sea.

Japan's preferred approach to managing potential maritime conflicts with China is three-fold: continuing to place primary emphasis on bilateral diplomacy; supporting the ASEAN Regional Forum and other regional mechanisms as loci of norm-creation and dispute resolution; and relying on the U.S.-Japan alliance to help manage Japan-China relations, including through a U.S.-Japan security relationship interpreted as extending to the Senkaku area.

Gilbert Rozman, along with other participants, argued that Japan's disabilities in dealing with China go beyond those discussed by Smith. They include: the entrenchment in China's foreign policy of the view that U.S.-Japan ties are not just about protecting Japan's interests but are part of a broad plot to encircle and contain China; the potential impact on regional audiences of a Chinese narrative that emphasizes Asian commonalities and differences between Asia (including Japan as part of Confucian East Asia) and the U.S.-led West; China's tendency to be less accommodating and compromising in periods when it thinks itself relatively strong; Japan's deep inability—rooted in such varied sources as ambivalence about national identity, bureaucratic divisions (between defense and foreign affairs) and the historical burden of Japan's actions during the Second World War and the resulting constitutional and political restrictions on Japan's military roles—to formulate a strong, big-picture approach to asserting Japan's interests; and Japan's seemingly waning political and economic power in an era of protracted and recurring economic crises, the impact of the tsunami and nuclear crisis, the transition to Democratic Party of Japan rule, and revolving-door premierships.

Jacques deLisle examined disputes over the South China Sea, which involve high-stakes issues for China, including economics (fish, hydrocarbon resources and trade routes for manufactured exports and raw material imports) and security (sea lanes of communication, friction-prone interactions with the U.S. navy, and chronic tension—and occasional confrontations and skirmishes—with regional states, especially Vietnam and the Philippines). There has been a tendency to over-predict China's stance on the South China Sea—and territorial disputes generally and even foreign relations as a whole—from statements and actions concerning the South China Sea that have been merely: short-term trends toward conflict or cooperation, high-profile but fleeting crises, false rumors of Chinese actions at sea, unconfirmed statements by senior officials, intemperate newspaper editorials, or accommodating policy positions cherry-picked by analysts from more ambiguous contexts. Still, China's approach to the South China Sea has traits typical of its approach to international law and international relations, including: unclarity, mixed pro-status quo and revisionist positions, and overall consistency with China's near-term interests.

DeLisle identified three types of claims. First, China claims the zone within a "9-dash line" that appears on Chinese maps and encloses a vast U-shaped area extending to near the coastlines of the other states that enclose the sea. This claim: originated in the pre-PRC era; invokes a long history of discovery, control and international treaties; and is echoed in PRC laws (including provisions asserting that UNCLOS leaves China's "historic rights" unaffected) and official statements about China's sovereign or territorial waters. This claim is radical in terms of geography and legal rights, and it relies on a strained reading of history and the international law of "historic" claims. Because historic rights are case-specific, however, the claim does not commit

China to radical positions more broadly. Although the “Chinese waters” claim holds a shrinking place in Chinese arguments, Beijing tellingly has not been willing to repudiate it.

Second, China asserts “indisputable” sovereignty over all land formations within the 9-dash line and rights over adjacent waters granted by the international law of the sea. The claim is set forth in official and quasi-official statements, Chinese laws, and PRC submissions in the UNCLOS process. China’s claim faces three difficulties. China invokes a history of discovery, occupation and exercises of sovereignty which, respectively, rely upon: the principle of inter-temporal law (which holds that now-repudiated law applies to determine the legality of actions taken when the old rule reigned)—a doctrine China criticizes in other contexts; and weak factual foundations, given the thinness of Chinese occupation, and the shallowness, incompleteness, intermittence and rejection by other states of China’s exercises of sovereignty. China claims as islands (or lesser land forms) entitled to law-of-the-sea rights over waters many land features that fall short of relevant international legal criteria or that get less weight that China assigns them in delimiting maritime boundaries. China claims a scope of authority over waters abutting “its” islands that go well beyond the universally accepted rights to regulate economic exploitation and marine scientific research within a 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. On China’s account (which is at odds with the U.S.’s and is in key respects revisionist of international law), EEZ rights include rights to require other states not to act in ways that: constitute espionage (which China classifies as regulable “research”); disobey Chinese laws (not just international law); or show a lack of “due regard” for China’s rights or an absence of “peaceful purposes” (both restrictions that China defines vaguely and potentially broadly).

Third, China asserts—that other states have additional obligations—ones not based primarily on the law of the sea—not to engage in acts that threaten China’s national security or core interests. China has developed this claim in the context of disputes with the U.S. over incidents at sea and in the air off China’s shores and U.S. joint naval exercises with regional states. Although Beijing frequently insists that it accepts principles of free navigation and overflight, this has offered the U.S. insufficient reassurance, especially in light of: China’s expansive definition of its rights as a coastal state; the coexistence of national security-based claims with China’s other two principal claims to the waters off its coast; Chinese forces’ shadowing, harassing or even colliding with U.S. vessels; and rising U.S. concerns about Chinese naval power’s expanding reach or tightening grip in the region. Secretary of State Clinton’s statement at the ASEAN Regional Forum is illustrative of the broader and growing assertion of a U.S. “national interest” that includes freedom of navigation and access to Asia’s maritime commons and respect for international law in the South China Sea.

China’s bundle of claims—and the ways it has pressed them—may serve China’s interests, at least for now. First, multiple, co-existing claims allow China to avoid: inadvertently conceding a potentially strong claim in a context of disputed facts and uncertain and evolving legal rules; and making clear to rival states a potentially revisionist agenda that China might pursue more effectively as its power and influence grow. Second, China’s rigid, assertive stance on the principle of sovereignty or other strong rights over the South China Sea area coexists with a willingness (which waxes and wanes) to be flexible in practice (by “setting aside” sovereignty questions and pursuing “cooperative development” and so on). Although this makes China look truculent and retrograde, it also preserves claims while reducing the need to press them in practice and thus risk undesirable conflict. It also may create political space with hardliners at home to pursue innovative, practical and peace-preserving approaches abroad. Third, China’s aversion to multilateralism (most of the time) and “internationalization” in South China Sea issues plays to China’s strengths. As the region’s greatest power, China can benefit from engaging regional states individually. As a rising power, it can benefit from tactics that delay comprehensive solutions. As a state seeking to become the dominant regional power and perhaps contemplating a Chinese Monroe Doctrine, China can resist a robust U.S. role by casting the issues as primarily bilateral (or trilateral) territorial disputes and by resisting “internationalization” and involvement of “outsiders.”

Richard Bush commented that China’s approach to the South China Sea issues should be seen as an example of “legal warfare” which, along with “media warfare” and “psychological warfare,” are part of an expanding arsenal identified by Chinese analysts in service of a national security policy that looks well beyond conventional military means and of which Sun Zi might be proud. China’s broad claims concerning the South China Sea should also be understood as part of its efforts to expand its defense perimeter and to preserve or build a strategic buffer—goals that China pursues along its periphery more generally. Finally, the ambiguity of China’s legal claims and the reluctance to drop any line of argument likely reflects the diverse views and interests—and unresolved policy conflicts—among actors that matter in shaping Chinese policy, including: the PLA Navy, other defense-related and civilian agencies with maritime responsibilities, the foreign ministry, state-linked natural recourse-development companies, nationalists among the netizens and the broader population, and so on. Bush also noted that China seems to have made progress in addressing the command and control problems that have contributed to military incidents with the U.S. at sea. Scott Kastner considered ways in which China’s apparent approach might hurt Chinese interests or at least involve complicated trade-offs among Chinese interests and among the actors who shape Chinese policy. For example, China’s intransigence on principled claims of sovereignty, its strong pushback against a U.S. role, and its unwillingness to opt clearly for particular positions on legal issues at least threaten to preclude potentially viable compromises and to raise suspicions abroad about China’s agenda.

DRAWING A LINE SOMEWHERE?: CHINA’S APPROACH TO SOUTH ASIA, TIBET AND THE QUESTION OF LAND

FRONTIERS...AND COMPARISONS TO TAIWAN / HONG KONG

John Garver characterized relations with India as the weak and troublesome spot in China's generally successful engagement with the region along its southern periphery. With most of its South Asian neighbors and near-neighbors, China has pursued friendly cooperation across multiple dimensions, often invoking its venerable "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (which China and India jointly created). Economically, China has closed the gap or surpassed India in importance as a trade partner for many regional states. Even with traditionally closely India-linked Nepal, China's economic aid has increased and trade has risen sharply, beginning to close the gap with Nepal-India trade. In political relations, China has made gains through its policy of pursuing dialogue and regional cooperation to build mutual understanding and trust. Nepal is a striking example: inclusion of Maoist/communist former rebels in Nepal's post-monarchical polity has marked an increase in Chinese, and a decline in Indian, influence. In military affairs, China has stressed that military-to-military relations are part of normal state-to-state relations. It has thus portrayed its ties to Pakistan as unremarkable and has broken India's hold as Nepal's exclusive supplier of military assistance and arms. More broadly, China has pressed in South Asia its general views that sovereign independent states have foreign policy autonomy, that states should base their relations on mutual interests, and that third parties (especially extra-regional states such as the United States) should stay out of bilateral relations.

The biggest problem for this Chinese approach to South Asia has been China's neighbor and fellow Asian rising great power, India. India is the one state in the region with which China shares a still-disputed border. India views China's rise as threatening and encircling. Troubling developments for India include: China's overtures toward Nepal; secure Chinese control over, and ongoing sinicization of, Tibet and the construction of infrastructure giving China, and the PLA, easier access to areas near the Tibet-India border; China's advances in the Indian Ocean, including an anti-piracy role for the PLA navy in the Gulf of Aden and investments in militarily useful port facilities in Sri Lanka and Pakistan; the continuing close security, economic and other ties with India's principal adversary (and China's "all weather friend"), Pakistan; and China's warming ties with Myanmar (and associated investment in infrastructure to facilitate exploitation of natural resources). Although only a minority of Indian analysts discerns an anti-India plot in China's South Asia strategy and behavior, most see China's rising power and influence as a problem for India. And the stinging legacy of India's defeat in the 1962 border war with China lingers and colors Indian attitudes. An India concerned about China's South Asia agenda has significant means of responding, including its still-formidable leverage and influence with most South Asian states, and its potential to cooperate with extraregional powers such as the United States, Japan and Indonesia.

Although not seeing India on its own as a major threat, China has been concerned about India's distrust toward China and has responded with a variety of tactics to reduce the risk that India will mobilize resources, and cooperate with others (especially the U.S. since 2000), to impede China's regional agenda. China portrays India's fears as groundless, rooted in misperception or New Delhi's listening to theories peddled by those in the West who seek to gin up a China threat. Beijing also has sought to offer reassurance to New Delhi. It has enunciated goals of rapprochement. It has issued statements, particularly at summits, that China and India are not rivals or mutual threats but are partners which can rise simultaneously and which can cooperate on issues such as South-South relations, climate change, reshaping the international economic and political orders and promoting principles of non-intervention. Such reassurance has been undercut by China's accusing India of a "lack of sincerity" when India defended nuclear tests in 1998 as a response to China, when India entered a defense cooperation agreement with the U.S. in 2006, and when India's stance on the disputed India-Pakistan border prompted a year-and-a-half diplomatic offensive from Beijing and media talk of war. Finally, China also has tried to be cautious and keep a low profile, in keeping with Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy dictum *taoguang yanghui* (literally, "hide brightness, cultivate obscurity"). The most striking examples have involved Pakistan. Beijing has insisted that its partnership with Pakistan is not meant to balance India. Beijing has rebuffed Pakistan's pursuit of more robust political and economic partnerships and highly visible symbolic enhancements of bilateral ties, including Pakistan's offers to become a "trade and energy corridor" for China, Pakistan's calls for a non-U.S.-centric South Asian security order, and Pakistan's proposal for a PLA navy presence at Gwadar.

China also has refrained from pushing against a U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean and South Asia. Although somewhat ambivalent, China has recognized the advantages of a strong U.S. role. Without the U.S., Pakistan would become more economically and politically dependent on China and more problematic for Chinese foreign policy. India would be more resistant to China's taking on the role Beijing has coveted, and the U.S. has supported, in the Gulf of Aden anti-piracy mission. And Afghanistan could become an unwanted responsibility for China (rather than the economic opportunity it has become since the U.S. toppled the Taliban). China's restraint also reflects its confidence that the region is headed toward a multipolar order in the wake of China's ongoing rise and the U.S.'s corresponding relative decline.

Ashley Tellis commented, first, that China has a full-fledged strategy toward India (and not the mere attitude of indifference asserted by some Western observers of China—though not Garver). India is a second-rank concern for China (far behind the U.S.), but is still important. China's efforts to appear relatively indifferent to India, coupled with its pursuit of relations with countries along India's periphery, have served China's geostrategic interests. Second, China's cultivation of ties with other South Asian states has been made possible partly by India's choices. India acquiesced partly because of its weakness and the rise of globalization, but also partly because China's ties (except in the case of Pakistan) are often compatible with India's

interests. India has largely given up on a South Asian order of Indian hegemony in favor of one that tolerates regional states' ties with extraregional states, including the United States and China. Third, China's gains with South Asian states reflect those states' interests and choices. Bordering India, having few ties with one another, and long in India's shadow, they see China's overtures as creating opportunities to play China and India off against one another. (Here again, Pakistan, with its hostile relationship to China and large and long-standing ties to China is the exception).

Fourth, China and India are likely to become maritime rivals, with the rivalry centered on the Indian Ocean. China's rising naval power (assuming it continues) and China's interests in the sea lanes of communication that run across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa portend a Chinese challenge to Indian dominance in the area. India is already focusing on cooperating with other states to balance China as a maritime power (and the strength China has gained through cooperation with Indian Ocean states)—an agenda aided by littoral Asian states' fears of incorporation in a Chinese-dominated regional order. The U.S. is the key extraregional power and Japan an incipient partner for India in such a balancing strategy. Fifth, the nature of China-India relations depends significantly on the United States. If the U.S. continues to insist—as it should—on global primacy, then the China-India relationship is a subordinate rivalry. If not, it would become a more primary and potentially dangerous one and India would face the prospect of other states' seeing no alternative to bandwagoning with China.

Gilbert Rozman was skeptical about the long-term viability of a generally positive China-India relationship. China sees India, like Japan, as part of a U.S.-led effort to contain China and China's relatively accommodating stance toward a large U.S. role in the region for the time being stems in part from an underlying belief that the U.S. is in long-term decline. Pending the long-term shift in regional power in China's favor, the U.S. opposition to the development of great power-centered "spheres of influence" is compatible with China's aims and interests in South Asia. Partly because of internal divisions and national identity issues, India (like Japan) has not formulated a strong response to China's rise. In this context, China's pan-Asian and anti-Western narrative might gain some traction with India and its neighbors, but it has not done so yet in what remains a relationship with a low level of cooperation.

Allen Carlson argued that much of the conventional account of China's approach to disputes along its periphery tends to draw relatively sharp distinctions between Beijing's stance on maritime and land border issues, or between its aggressive stance in international affairs (including territorial disputes with some neighboring states) and insecurity at home (including perceived threats of separatism in Tibet and Xinjiang). Such dichotomies—as well as the widely held view that China has become uniformly more combative about territorial issues in recent years—risk overlooking an emerging pluralism with potentially significant policy implications. In recent Chinese policy-relevant scholarly analyses of how to control and govern inland border regions, Carlson discerned three divergent perspectives. These perspectives have emerged in a complex and evolving context: long-term implementation of Reform-Era economic policies that have pursued development and integration of those regions; longstanding removal of external security threats in those regions; a growing sense of China's capacity to shape its external environment; and rising unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang that has raised doubt about past policies and brought a new emphasis on maintaining stability.

The three lines of thinking, so far most evident in academic writing, differ over how, not whether, to pursue goals of safeguarding Chinese sovereignty and maintaining national unity. The first approach, associated with "frontier studies," looks to China's late imperial past as a source of wisdom about how to govern China's unruly inland border areas. It finds much that parallels contemporary PRC policy, including allowing significant political autonomy and accommodating differences among minority peoples and the Han majority. It also suggests that Beijing's current policies might be improved by putting less emphasis on borders and sovereignty (a concept increasingly under assault in Western scholarly analyses as well) and focusing more on questions of governance and flexibility in governance of frontier areas. A second line of thinking—"border security studies"—is more critical of existing policy, engages contemporary foreign arguments about the tensions between a still-Westphalian international order and the powerful forces of globalization, and emphasizes the new theme of "non-traditional security" issues and their relevance to China's restive frontier areas. It calls for a more fundamental shift away from stressing sovereignty and military threats toward understanding more thoroughly the cultural and other factors that contribute to a weak and possibly weakening sense of Chinese national identity among the non-Han people in these regions and, in turn, to threats—primarily of a nontraditional security type—to the Chinese regime's ability to govern and control them. A third perspective, greatly influenced by Western "culturalist" studies that have remained outside mainstream Chinese thinking, is still more at odds with existing policies. It argues that Chinese approaches to governing frontier regions had been most successful in the imperial past, and will be most successful in the future, when they "culturalize" rather than "politicize" relations with ethnic minority groups along Han China's periphery. Casting such groups as minority "nationalities" linked to distinct geographic areas with associated political structures—a policy the PRC inherited from the ill-fated Soviet Union—has been a mistake. Treating them instead as ethnic-cultural groups to be addressed through policies on inter-ethnic relations—something more akin to approaches found in India and the United States—is a more promising route to the goals of promoting national identity and preserving national unity and social stability.

These emerging lines of analysis and policy prescription have not yet had much impact on regime policy and they are not likely to do so in the immediate future. Yet, they should not be discounted because their proponents share the Chinese

regime's fundamental goals of unity and stability and because their prescriptions seek to address problems that existing policies increasingly fail to solve—a shortcoming made starkly evident with the resurgence of ethnic unrest and violence in Tibet in 2008 and Xinjiang in 2009.

Richard Bush, Scott Kastner and other participants agreed that the emergence of diverse and critical policy-relevant views on Tibet, Xinjiang and border issues was an interesting development that might prove significant. They underscored, however, the limited current and uncertain future impact of this thinking on policy. They argued that the practical meaning of these views depended on unknown or unexplored contextual factors. To what extent do members of the top elite who shape policy take one or more of the new strands of thinking seriously? How do views about these approaches vary across institutions that have significant roles in making and implementing policies toward Tibet, Xinjiang and border regions: the People's Liberation Army, the People's Armed Police, the Ministry of State Security, the Party's United Front Work Department, the many entities handling economic development policy for inland areas, the religious affairs overseers in the Party and state, and so on? What is the impact on, and interaction with, broad trends and shifts in Chinese foreign policy, particularly China's relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization states which border these Chinese inland frontier regions? Are the proponents of new policy thinking sufficiently attuned to the changing economic, political, migration and other situations on the ground in Xinjiang and Tibet, such that policymakers will see such theorists' views as relevant to the day-to-day choices they must make? Some commentators also worried that China might in the end see the Soviet collapse as teaching a lesson that Moscow was too soft and that repression (rather than the prescriptions offered or implied by China's new "border" thinking) was Beijing's best strategy. This could become more likely if China's sense of being confronted by a U.S.-led containment effort continues to grow.

Michael Davis examined China's policies toward Tibet from the perspective of international human rights and autonomy. Though Tibet has long been a disputed area along China's frontier, acquiescence by other states to China's sovereign claims has severely limited prospects for Tibetan independence, though such claims lurk in the background of the Sino-Tibetan dispute. This reality has meant that international laws and norms concerning majority or indigenous rights of autonomy—rather than the laws and norms of statehood and sovereignty—have been the focus of international concerns about Tibet. The March 2008 uprising in Tibet, the Chinese government's reaction and foreign governments' reaction to Beijing's actions clearly reaffirmed this fundamental pattern. China reiterated that sovereignty over Tibet and other peripheral territory is a "core interest," that efforts to "split" China are unacceptable, and that the Dalai Lama's 2008 proposed Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People is an unacceptable bid for "covert independence" despite its apparent consistency with the Chinese constitution's provisions on autonomy for minority nationalities (as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the PRC had supported in the UN General Assembly).

The Chinese government's response to the pre-Olympics unrest continued longstanding PRC positions, including: a historical claim that Tibet has been an "inseparable" part of China since ancient times (a contention that is at odds with evidence of Sino-Tibetan diplomatic relations over several dynasties prior to Chinese occupation during the late Qing era, and with Tibet's de facto independence between the 1911 Chinese Revolution and the 1950 occupation by the PRC's PLA); and an assertion that Tibetan rights to autonomy are no greater than those of any other "national minority" in the PRC (a stance that ignores the PRC's unique 17-point treaty-like agreement with Tibet and China's earlier practice in international agreements and statements acknowledging that Tibet enjoyed a special level of autonomy). The PRC's restrictive positions on Tibetan autonomy also reflect long-established practices, including: a constitutional and statutory regime for "national minority" regions that is much less flexible and expansive than the one for special administrative regions such as Hong Kong and Macao; a political and governmental structure for Tibetan (and other) "autonomous regions" that has replicated broader national political structures, given positions of real authority to non-Tibetans and replaced traditional indigenous political structures that PRC rule had destroyed; and drives for "patriotic education," economic development (which has fueled Han immigration), repression of dissent, and destruction of traditional Tibetan culture (particularly during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s).

Davis invoked international legal standards—especially those addressing the self-determination of peoples and grounded in the UN Charter and the principal UN Human Rights Covenants and articulated in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—as means to promote more meaningful autonomy for Tibet. Tibetans' claims to robust international legal protection of their rights to autonomy stem from their rights having been "internationalized" through, first, recognition in international agreements or similar arrangements (such as the 17-point accord) and, second, China's denial of Tibetans' rights to self-determination and autonomy. (Especially for indigenous peoples, denial of autonomy or equality becomes a basis for international legal rights claims, including possibly a right to a separate state as the means for implementing rights to self-determination). Davis argued that there should be legal and political space for the Chinese government to adopt a more accommodating approach to Tibetan autonomy. Such an approach is consistent with China's constitutional provisions on minority autonomy regions, and it could engage a moderate, influential interlocutor on the Tibetan side (the Dalai Lama and others behind the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy). It also offers important benefits to Beijing. It promises—more than would costly, harsher repression—greater stability in a restless border region. It can reduce the fear of chaos in frontier regions that has become a key impediment to broader, necessary political reforms in China as a whole. And it can ameliorate other states' concerns that China's policies toward Tibet (and Xinjiang) portend an increasingly powerful China's aggressive

stance in international affairs.

Arthur Waldron was more pessimistic about the prospects for progress toward greater Tibetan autonomy. He argued that China's historical claims are even weaker—and thus more aggressive—than Davis's account indicated. He cited the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 and the ambiguity of the territorial provisions in the Republic of China constitution as additional evidence of the frailty and vagueness of Chinese claims that Tibet is part of China and internationally accepted as such. He noted that India had in earlier times imposed something of a check, given India's awareness of its strategic vulnerability to a China that fully dominated Tibet and China's claims to Indian regions that Beijing dubs "South Tibet." But this deterrent has faded and could fade further given the relative power shifts between China and India. Moreover, China is acutely aware of the risks that Tibet might break away, much as previously Chinese-ruled Mongolia and Taiwan have done and as the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union did. Such fears have prompted policies of Han-in-settlement and broader efforts to "sinicize" China's border regions. Western expectations that China will soon moderate its approach are unduly sanguine. China's recent stance on the South China Sea indicates the geographic expansion of China's strong assertion of sovereignty. Given other states' acquiescence in Chinese claims to Tibet, there is a risk that an overconfident China will be imprudently aggressive along one of its unresolved maritime or inland borders. This could bring confrontation that could escalate into full-blown conflict.

Jacques deLisle characterized Davis as depicting pervasive, comprehensive and seemingly entrenched PRC checks on Tibetan autonomy. These include: a negotiation process that avoided internationalization and rejected anything approaching equality of the parties; political limits on the substantive content of "autonomy laws" (which require approval at the highest level); institutional structures (replication, extension and control of the PRC's Leninist Party-state structure in the Tibetan areas and the fragmentation of ethnic Tibetans across several provincial units); ideological and cultural indoctrination (eroding Tibetan culture); demographic transformation (Han in-settlement and subsequent claims to legitimate coercion to protect Han residents from Tibetan violence), and willingness to use great force (especially in 1959, 1989 and 2008). From the regime's perspective, Tibet presents a "perfect storm" likely to draw especially strong responses: elements of separatism (which may grow as the current Dalai Lama fades); cross-border linkages (to the government in exile in India); ethno-religious—rather than merely secular, politically liberal—agendas (which, in Beijing's experience, means more zealous, even suicidal, resistance); and support from the global community (which—from governments to NGOs to celebrities—views Tibetans as a clearly distinct "people" with an appealing culture and values). Although, as Davis points out, intransigence is costly to China, the international costs Beijing perceives may be declining now that China has: lost much of its recently accrued soft power; driven neighbors into seemingly enduring hedging strategies; and grown in confidence that its power gives it latitude to define and protect its core interests.

DeLisle also compared Tibet (and Xinjiang) to Taiwan and Hong Kong—other regions of complicated and disputed sovereignty. For all of them, China asserts empirically untenable historical claims of the region's Chineseness since ancient times and denies the effect or relevance of actions that formally or in practice separated such territory entirely from Chinese control or gave it great autonomy for very long periods. In terms of the law of self-determination of peoples emphasized by Davis, Tibet and Xinjiang are stronger cases than are ethnically and culturally Chinese Hong Kong and Taiwan. Yet, in terms of political fact, Hong Kong and, much more so, Taiwan have much more autonomy. This contrast may illustrate that it is better to have international political fact than international law on one's side. But it also shows that the more fundamental principle of international law is not the rights of peoples but the proscription on using force to destroy the autonomy of states and near-state entities.

Finally, Tibet-Taiwan-Hong Kong comparisons offer a cautionary tale about international-law-as-formal-agreements and a more hopeful perspective on international-law-as-customary-norms. The treaty-like agreement between the Chinese central government and Tibet has not protected Tibetan autonomy. The treaty between the U.K. and the PRC was a more full-bodied international accord among equals and has done much more for autonomy in Hong Kong, even though the Hong Kong Joint Declaration's promises are limited, their implementation imperfect and the risk of erosion of pledged autonomy real. Therein lies a warning, well-understood in Taiwan, about the risks Taipei will face if and when it negotiates accords for cross-Strait political relations. On the other hand, much of Tibet's limited leverage for autonomy stems from "norms" and "values" factors: principles of self-determination for ethnic minorities; suffering PRC-inflicted violations of core civil and political human rights; the increasingly democratic character of the Tibetan government in exile; and rule of law values (albeit in the weak form of demanding China live up to its own laws). As is well understood in Taiwan and to a significant degree in Hong Kong, securing international support—and the protection (albeit limited) for autonomy it brings—depends on embracing and embodying values such as a distinct "people-like" identity (for Taiwanese although much less so for Hong Kong residents), democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and so on.

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