

**A YEAR AFTER THE MARCH 2008 PROTESTS:
IS CHINA PROMOTING STABILITY IN TIBET?**

ROUNDTABLE
BEFORE THE
**CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA**
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

MARCH 13, 2009

Printed for the use of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.cecc.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

48-753 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2009

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Opening statement of Charlotte Oldham-Moore, Staff Director, Congressional-Executive Commission on China | 1 |
| Grob, Douglas, Cochairman's Senior Staff Member, Congressional-Executive Commission on China | 2 |
| Sperling, Elliot, Associate Professor, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University | 3 |
| Wangchuk, Tseten, Senior Research Fellow, Tibet Center, University of Virginia; Senior Editor, Voice of America, Tibetan Language Section | 6 |
| Smith, Warren, Writer, Radio Free Asia, Tibetan, Service | 9 |

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Sperling, Elliot | 28 |
| Smith, Warren | 29 |

A YEAR AFTER THE MARCH 2008 PROTESTS: IS CHINA PROMOTING STABILITY IN TIBET?

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA,
Washington, DC.

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room 628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Charlotte Oldham-Moore, Staff Director, presiding.

Also present: Douglas Grob, Cochairman's Senior Staff Member and Steve Marshall, Senior Advisor and Prisoner Database Program Director.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHARLOTTE OLDHAM-MOORE, STAFF DIRECTOR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you for attending this morning's roundtable. My name is Charlotte Oldham-Moore. I am the Staff Director of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. My colleague, Doug Grob, who is the Cochairman's Senior Staff Member, and I will give brief introductions of our guests, and then we will turn it over to the panelists who will have 10 minutes each to speak. Then, of course, we will turn to you in the audience for questions.

The topic of this roundtable, as you all are aware, is the current situation inside the Tibetan areas of China a year after the protests and the Chinese Government's crackdown. This roundtable takes place between two dates that many Tibetans consider to be highly sensitive. The first is March 10, which marks the 50th anniversary of what Tibetans know as the 1959 Tibetan uprising. It also marks the first anniversary of the start of last year's wave of Tibetan protests that occurred across the plateau and in other areas of China. That wave resulted in the arrest of thousands, and an untold number who are missing.

March 28, the second date, will mark the first instance of the Serf's Emancipation Day, a newly established Tibetan Autonomous Region holiday that celebrates China's dissolution, in 1959, of the Dalai Lama's Lhasa-based government.

This past year, in order to strengthen further its security crackdown, officials in Lhasa implemented a "Strike Hard Anti-Crime Campaign" that will run, they indicate, until at least late March, after Serf's Emancipation Day is observed.

International tourists and journalists, for now, are denied access to Tibetan areas of China. Chinese media reports tell us that secu-

rity forces are prepared to prevent Tibetan attempts to stage further protests.

The Chinese Government, over the past year, continues to press policies that have stoked frustration among Tibetans, saying such policies are essential for stability. The questions before our roundtable today, and to be addressed to the panelists, and also the audience are: have those policies served that objective? Has the dynamic between the Chinese Government and Tibetans changed over the last year, and if so, how? What should U.S. policymakers, Congress, and the Executive Branch watch for in the days and weeks ahead? These are the central questions before us today, a time of considerable fear and suffering, and, of course, uncertainty for many Tibetans. Our distinguished panelists will discuss the situation in Tibet today and help us to understand the background, as well as the outlook.

Now I will turn to my colleague, Doug Grob, who will introduce the witnesses.

STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS GROB, COCHAIRMAN'S SENIOR STAFF MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

Mr. GROB. Thanks very much, Charlotte. And thank you all for joining us here today. On behalf of Representative Sander Levin of Michigan, Cochairman of the Commission, I extend a warm welcome and thanks to you. I have the privilege of introducing our panelists to you today. To my left, Professor Elliot Sperling, an Associate Professor in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University. Professor Sperling has written extensively on Tibetan history and Sino-Tibetan relations. He is the recipient of MacArthur and Fulbright Fellowships. From 1996 to 1999, he served on the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. Professor Sperling teaches courses on the Civilization of Tibet, the History of Tibet, Tibet and the West, Sino-Tibetan Relations, and other topics. He is currently working on a short history of modern Tibet for Cambridge University Press. So, we are very fortunate and honored to have you here with us today.

Seated also to my left is Mr. Tseten Wangchuk. Mr. Wangchuk is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Virginia's Tibetan Center, and a Senior Editor with the Voice of America's Tibetan Language Service. He is currently based in Washington, DC, but was born in Lhasa and grew up in Tibet. In 1983, Mr. Wangchuk completed his bachelor's degree in Tibetan history in Beijing at the Central Nationalities University, which is now named Minzu University of China. From 1983 to 1996, he was a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and participated in field research in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, as well as in Tibetan autonomous areas in China outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Mr. Wangchuk also completed his Master's degree in public policy and international affairs at Columbia University in 1992. So, we are extremely pleased and honored by your presence here today, and we look forward to your remarks.

And, finally, to my right is Dr. Warren Smith. Dr. Smith is an independent scholar and received his Ph.D. in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He writes

about Tibetan politics for the Tibetan service of Radio Free Asia here in Washington, DC. His publications include “China’s Tibet: Autonomy or Assimilation?,” which was published last year by Rowman & Littlefield, and as well a book published in 1997 by Westview Press titled, “Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations.” So, thank you very much for your time this morning. We are very privileged to have you here, and look forward to your remarks.

At this point I would like to turn the floor over to Mr. Sperling.

**STATEMENT OF ELLIOT SPERLING, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES, INDIANA
UNIVERSITY**

Mr. SPERLING. Well, thank you very much. There is a prepared statement which I have, which is outside if anybody wants a copy of it. I will try and go over the main points. Please follow along.

Over the last several weeks, there’s been a build-up of tension in Tibet. We here have been asked to answer the question: is China promoting stability in Tibet? The short answer to that is, at the moment, by and large, yes. But it has to be qualified by pointing out that this stability is established by means of an effective lockdown in Tibet, as some have termed it, as well as the ongoing detention of political prisoners, hundreds of whom have been held since last year.

There are reports of monasteries blockaded, Internet and cell phone use cut over large areas of the Tibetan plateau, and a very intense security presence. So the answer to the question is, yes, there is stability, but it is at the cost of severe security measures and a population subject to severe restrictions on movement and communications.

Part of the measures designed to secure Tibet are related to the imposition of political education inside and outside monasteries, which are meant to reaffirm China’s narrative of Tibet’s historical place within the Chinese state. This, in turn, is tied to the fact that discontent in Tibet—inevitably—goes at some point to the question of the legitimacy of China’s presence there.

The fact that March 10, which Tibetans observe as an effective national day, is the day on which mass protests began last year and which was the target date for the lockdown this year; the fact that protesters used the Tibetan national flag as their symbol: these attest to the nationalist content in Tibetan resentments and grievances. This is not to play down other areas of repression, but it is to assert something that this commission—in fact, I would say all outside observers—should bear in mind.

The U.S. Government often likes to view the Tibetan issue as either a religious or a cultural issue, a question of religious freedom. There are religious and cultural questions at work here, but we have to acknowledge the underlying nationalist sentiment below that. We may wish that the Tibetans were saying something else, but they are not. If we want to understand what is going on, we have to start with what the Tibetans are actually saying, not what we would wish that they were saying.

Now, as I said, these sentiments represent a rejection of China’s decades-long efforts to control the interpretation of Tibetan history.

China's narrative is that Tibet has been an integral part of China ever since the 13th century. This is a construct. This idea really never took shape until the 1950s, after Tibet had been annexed to the People's Republic of China. Prior to that time, the general Chinese attitude, if they thought about Tibet at all, was that Tibet had become a subject vassal state of the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century.

Now, I do not want to go into too much arcana here, but basically there is a big discrepancy. The traditional Chinese narrative had Tibet as part of a large empire, which is to say that it is an imperial subject, and that is not the same as being an integral part of a country. So the idea of Tibet being an integral part of the country did not really take form in Chinese statements until the 1950s—in fact, after the 1950s. Even in the 1950s, the terminology that was still used was, well, that Tibet had been a feudal dependency of China. So, there are a lot of questions there.

So we can understand that you have this struggle over history, and at the same time you have a struggle, a contest if you will, over historical time. We saw some of it last month in February with the struggle over the celebration and commemoration of Tibetan New Year. A mass movement had begun—grassroots, I might add—to demonstrate respect and mourning for those who lost their lives in the protest a year ago, by not celebrating Tibet New Year, which was on February 25. This was quite successful across the Tibetan plateau. China contested this and tried to cajole and force celebrations, but this was largely without success.

Now we have March. We are here in March and the struggle has been between adhering to March 10 as a national day, which Tibetans do, although they have to do this in various ways—of course, it is not legal, by any means, but that is why we had demonstrations last year on March 10; a struggle between that and China's determination to purge March of any such nationalist significance and institute, instead, a new holiday: March 28, Serf's Emancipation Day.

Now, there is no doubt that March 10, which came and went three days ago, was stifled, but it took a tremendous effort on the part of the Chinese authorities, which I have already just described. I want to add that the manner in which it was done will certainly not end the question. On the contrary, I believe it will simply nurture further resentments and grievances.

And again, you have to remember that there is historical memory at work here. The arrests and deaths of Tibetans in previous March 10 incidents such as last year's only serve to strengthen the resonance of the struggle that the date represents and link later generations to the history of March 10, 1959. That is to say, all the repression that happens on March 10 adds to this historical memory and creates a link between generations, the generation you have now and the generation of 1959.

Now, will Serf's Emancipation Day be successfully celebrated? Well, it will certainly be realized, but only by coercive government dictate. So I think that we can look forward to gala television programs on CCTV, et cetera.

Now, this is relevant, and I will make the point: the new holiday is relevant to our understanding of the collapse of talks between

the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese Government in early November. Many of us, I would say, understood long ago that these talks were doomed, that they were meant only to drag on until the Dalai Lama's death, when China would select its own Dalai Lama and so, as China believes, resolve the Tibet issue.

After the last talks ended, the Tibetan delegates returned to India and they vowed to make no statement before a special meeting was convened in Dharamsala, which happened later on, but there was no need for them to be coy because, within days, their Chinese counterparts held a press conference and said the talks had gone nowhere, they rejected compromise with the Dalai Lama on any of his proposals, and stated that while the door was open for the Dalai Lama to return, he would have to recognize the errors of his ways. So after almost 30 years of contact, China gave a very clear signal that those contacts had not advanced beyond square one.

Now, significantly, in 1981, Hu Yaobang, the Communist Party General Secretary, had told the Dalai Lama's brother Gyalo Thondup, that "there should be no more quibbling about past history, namely the events of 1959. Let us disregard and forget this." In its dealings with the Dalai Lama's exiled government, China largely operated under that premise, so the decision to recognize March 28, 1959, as Serf's Emancipation Day puts 1959 back on the table and signals that the talks really are at a dead end. But I would like to stress that for those of us who were observing these things very clearly, this is no surprise. This was known long ago. It was easily observable.

So what is the United States to do with the Tibetan question, with the Tibetan issue, under these circumstances? I think everybody in this room is aware of Secretary of State Clinton's February 21 statement that human rights concerns about China "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis, and the security crisis."

Now, while such comments are unhelpful, the feckless policies and empty threats over Tibet that have been made in the past are the real problem. In other words, we have been making all sorts of threats which we do not carry through on, and this really is the larger problem. Under Bill Clinton, revocation of most favored nation trade status, which then came to be PNTR, permanent normal trade relations, was periodically threatened, to no effect.

What I am saying is, it is far worse to make a threat like that and then stand back and not carry it through than simply to remain silent. Under George Bush, there was talk of skipping the opening Olympic ceremony, but of course he decided not to do that. So in many ways, Secretary of State Clinton simply articulated the real nature of U.S.-China policy.

Now, the Obama Administration certainly cannot be expected to act on the nationalist sentiments of Tibetans, especially when the Dalai Lama's and U.S. policy—I should stress, the Dalai Lama's policy and U.S. policy—have long been to recognize Tibet as a part of China.

Hillary Clinton could continue making the empty gestures of advocating simple religious freedom, urging more talks, which is what was going on. Even though these talks were going nowhere, for

years people were saying, “Yes, but we have to do something, so let us just talk.” But those talks, as I said, were being used to drag out the entire process, with China waiting for the Dalai Lama to die. So it wasn’t that you had to have talks so that something would be done. Those talks were being used by China for its own purposes and nobody wanted to see the reality of that.

So Hillary Clinton could continue making the empty gestures of advocating religious freedom, urging more talks, or she could adopt the very cynical position advocated by Nicholas Kristoff and Mel Goldstein in the New York Times that Tibetans should accept one-party Communist rule and some sort of cultural autonomy, leaving democratic aspirations completely out of the picture.

Now, these options are hardly satisfactory. But what the administration and what the Secretary of State absolutely should not do, is to add to the history of empty threats over Tibet. But they can address Chinese abuses in Tibet in every reasonable forum, strongly and without apology.

The Secretary of State can make China deservedly uncomfortable without using unrealistic threats, but she has to commit to a forceful human rights agenda. She should not fool herself that the issue is simply a religious one. She has to understand what it is that motivates Tibetan protests, and even though the administration might wish that Tibetan aspirations were not nationalist in nature, it must support, in absolute terms, the right of Tibetans to voice their aspirations peacefully.

These are things that she can do, or she can reiterate once more, if anyone did not hear it the first time, that human rights in China will not be treated seriously until the crises in global warming, finance, and security are resolved.

Thank you.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Sperling.

Tseten Wangchuk?

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sperling appears in the appendix.]

STATEMENT OF TSETEN WANGCHUK, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, TIBET CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA; SENIOR EDITOR, VOICE OF AMERICA, TIBETAN LANGUAGE SERVICE

Mr. WANGCHUK. Thank you for inviting me. Before I start my talk, I want to make it clear that what I say here represents my personal views, not the views of Voice of America (VOA) or the U.S. Government. I am obligated to say that.

I want to look at this issue over the past year, and perhaps to look back even further, to look at Chinese policy in Tibet, to see what kind of impact it is having. Of course, the question before this panel is whether or not China’s policy in Tibet is creating stability. I think Professor Sperling very eloquently described that, yes, it is creating “stability.” This year it seems like there hasn’t been a major demonstration like there was last year. But at what cost?

In some ways, if you look back beyond last year’s crackdown, in the past 50 years there have been so many crackdowns and so much repression in Tibet. But I think last year was different. I think that what happened last year could explain a lot of things that are yet to come.

First, I think of last year, during the period after the demonstration in Lhasa. In the first few hours of that demonstration, Tibetans did set fires to Chinese shops and they beat up some Chinese shopkeepers—and people even died. But that in no way represents the whole of that demonstration, or the whole of what happened. But, in any case, the Chinese Government, or rather, the official state media, used a small amount of video footage, only a few minutes of it, and replayed it, and replayed it. That was really unprecedented.

If you really consider their narration, how they presented the Lhasa demonstration to the Chinese audience, then it is really, I think, unlike yesterday. They present to you just a few bad people. And the majority of Tibetans—how happy they are. But in those few days, after that demonstration, they really painted the whole Tibetan group, the entire Tibetan ethnicity, in a manner that made it seem like the entire Tibetan ethnic group was beating up the Chinese people. This has really increased the level of Chinese nationalistic sentiment so much.

I think in the past, of course, the relationship between Tibetans and the Chinese has had a lot of political problems. I grew up there. But on some levels, the Tibetans and Chinese, at a personal level, don't have that much animosity between them. But since last March, I think the Tibetans and the Chinese are becoming racially hateful toward each other—in other parts of the world you can see the hatred. Truly, you can see it. This sort of hatred is really rare. I think, by and large, that the Chinese Government is really responsible for this. Whatever their purpose may have been at the time, they were responsible for those things.

Another interesting part of this phenomenon—and it may be a product of the times, a product of the global anti-terrorism movement, and similar factors—is that Tibetans in China certainly have been discriminated against when they try to check into hotels, when they board flights at airports, and in all sorts of other aspects of their lives. This particular impact is very different from previous crackdowns. In past crackdowns, the impact was on people who participated in demonstrations—whatever happened, they were arrested.

But the Tibetan elite, most of them are, in effect, working for the Chinese Government. So, in the past, they have not really been affected by crackdowns. But this time it is very different. There are members of the Tibetan elite who travel and who check into hotels. These Tibetans, even if they are functioning as some sort of government official on a trip, they too have been discriminated against. So the impacts on Tibetans are truly large. This is taking place regionally, not just in Lhasa and in specific areas, but all over Tibet. This is something that is unprecedented in some ways. I believe that somehow people need to realize that this has major implications for the long term.

But so far, policymakers are unable to find a way to deal with this, or a way to address Tibetan grievances. Of course, there are a million reasons now. Elliot just spoke about the historical reasons, and many other things. I want to mention an additional point. The reason I mention this particular point is not because it is the only reason, but because very few people talk about it. None-

theless, it is a very important point, and we need to consider it. It is a matter of what I would call “an interest group.”

In the past 20 years in China, the people who manage Tibet—and we are talking about tens of thousands of people—have really gained power. Their economic interests and everything else are built on this power. They blame everything that goes wrong in Tibet—whether it is something to do with the Tibetan people themselves, or whether it is anything else—whatever goes wrong in Tibet, they blame it on the Dalai Lama, or on the Tibetans in exile, like the Tibetan Youth Congress. This creates such a powerful argument.

These policies, and the self-interests that these officials have to continue such policies—and not merely to continue them, but to really push them forward, even exaggerate them—is continuing. For the past 20 years these people—and as I said, there are tens of thousands of them—are living on this. They are making money on this. These are powerful people.

My understanding of the situation now is that, at least in the past couple of years, whenever there is debate about Tibet policy in China, there are different voices. I’m not saying that there is a different “faction,” that one group is saying that China should give the Dalai Lama autonomy, nothing like that.

But now people are saying that perhaps we should be looking at things differently, and that perhaps we would find some different alternatives. But each time when such voices speak up, then the group of people who have been in charge of Tibet—the group of people whose livelihood, and in some ways their children’s livelihood depends on this policy, the group for whom everything depends on this policy—that group is so powerful. That group, really an interest group, has people who are writing books to argue their point, people who are on top of the power structure, and who have the rhetoric and everything else to push their policy.

I think it is really important to see just how important this group is in the role that they play. Sometimes it looks as though we are seeing only the truly top level of China’s state leadership, and we assume such high-ranking views are the only reason for what is happening. But actually, if you look at the details, there’s a messy political process going on. In that process, there are people who have political and economic self-interests playing a role in this particular policy.

Since I don’t have much time left and there’s another point I want to speak about since we are addressing the U.S. Congress and Government. My fear is that, now that the Taiwan issue has sort of melted away in China, the Chinese Government has shown since last year a tendency to successfully use the Tibetan issue to galvanize the Chinese nationalistic sentiment. In this way, they have managed to somewhat unite all kinds of people who otherwise would have a problem with the government. With the economic crisis in China, the Chinese Government really needs some sort of common enemy to unite a lot of the Chinese people.

I am really worried that perhaps the Tibetan issue is becoming that uniting factor. In that process, of course, Tibetans would be the victim. But when the Chinese Government builds such an enemy, the West is becoming an integral part of it. That is histori-

cally a part of it. That is why I believe that we need to be aware of what is happening, and not to fall into that trap.

For the Chinese, it is very easy to accept such an explanation, and to say that the “issue” of Tibet doesn’t exist, that Tibet is part of western China, that the West is just using Tibet. So, all these Tibetan “issues” are nothing more than the West wanting to split China, to weaken China, to contain China, all those sorts of accusations. I understand that for most Chinese people it is very easy to accept this kind of notion, but it is a very dangerous notion. I am Tibetan. Really, the hardest part of this is that the Chinese people are not able to see the Tibetan issue as it is. Rather, they see this as some kind of larger issue, an issue that they have with the West. This is a tragedy.

The last point I just want to mention is on the Chinese Government. Whether they want to talk to the Dalai Lama or not—they probably don’t—they still have to manage Tibet. But the way they have handled Tibet in the past year, particularly in the past year, it is really difficult to see how sustainable this kind of policy can be.

Among the Chinese intellectuals now, you can see that people are presenting different views. I hope that it is just temporary that the government is so insecure that they just have to crack down. But in the longer term, they are hoping to find a different alternative at least to manage Tibet.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you, Tseten. We are very fortunate to have you here today.

Warren Smith. I have to plug his books before and after this roundtable. He has written two terrific books on Tibet. I encourage you to read them. They’re long, but they’re good. And I’ll plug the books again after he gives his remarks.

Mr. SMITH. Actually, only the first one is long.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Actually, I haven’t read the second one yet because I haven’t gotten through the first one.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wangchuk appears in the appendix.]

**STATEMENT OF WARREN SMITH, WRITER, RADIO FREE ASIA,
TIBETAN SERVICE**

Mr. SMITH. I have to begin by thanking the Commission for inviting me, but also to say that any opinions I express are my own and not those of Radio Free Asia.

I have a written statement with the title, “Serf’s Emancipation Day and China’s New Offensive on Tibet,” about Serf’s Emancipation Day, which is a brand-new holiday which Tibetans will be coerced by every means possible to celebrate. The authorities in Tibet have many means to make people go along with such events as these. They have neighborhood committees. They will require one person from each family to attend. They will require anyone who has any relationship with the government, which means almost everyone, to attend. They will have all of the song-and-dance troupes that will be required to perform, both in person and on TV.

In other words, it will be hard to avoid, so you can expect, if you are following this issue, a lot of Chinese propaganda on the day of March 28. But in the lead-up as well, there has been a tremendous

amount of propaganda, testimonies of so-called former serfs, and a museum exhibition in Beijing, a new film about the sufferings of the serfs, and all of this kind of thing.

The Tibet revolt in Lhasa that began on 10 March 1959 actually originated in eastern Tibet in 1956, when the Chinese instituted what they called “democratic reforms.” It gradually spread to central Tibet, where the same reforms had not been instituted. The Dalai Lama fled on the 17th of March.

On the 28th of March, China dissolved the former Tibetan government. On the 31st of March, the Chinese authorities organized public demonstrations of Tibetans in Lhasa, Shigatse, and in many other cities, supposedly spontaneous rallies to support the government and support the repression of the revolt, and to support the People’s Liberation Army.

The Tibetans who worked for the government produced similar statements on this day, praising the party and denouncing those who had rebelled, saying that they had only rebelled because they were opposed to reforms, even though the reforms had been delayed in central Tibet, so there was no immediate reason for them to revolt for that reason. The reason for the revolt was, as Elliot said, a matter of nationalistic Tibetan interest.

The democratic reforms in Tibet were only actually announced in July. On the 3rd of July, local officials said that they would begin democratic reforms, which meant distribution of land and class divisions. Class divisions would then lead to class struggle. You have struggle sessions in which people are required to denounce each other and proclaim their support for the government. What this was, was a means to identify those who were willing to go along and those who were going to be resistant.

So it was far from being what it sounds. China now wants Tibetans to celebrate this, but in fact it was part of the repression of the revolt because it allowed the Chinese authorities to identify any potential opponents and to repress them. Class divisions already identified those of the upper class who were scheduled for repression unless they happened to be some of the few well-known collaborators.

But the reason China has chosen March 28 to celebrate Serf’s Emancipation Day instead of in July when it was actually started, is because it is a counter propaganda thing. As Elliot said, they want to counteract the effect of last year’s riots and demonstrations and they want to counteract the annual commemoration of March 10.

So they wanted to have a new celebration that will basically celebrate their theme about what Tibet is really about instead of what Tibetans think it is really about, and their theme is that it’s all about the liberation of the serfs. This is China’s favorite theme about Tibet and it is one that fools more foreigners because there are legitimate questions about the nature of old Tibetan society. But that is not the issue of Tibet. The issue of Tibet is China’s right to rule over Tibet, or Tibetan self-determination. But China, as long as they can confine the discussion to how horrible was old Tibet, then they win because then nobody really talks about the real issue.

So this is the reason that they are having this celebration in March instead of July, so that they can have a large propaganda demonstration and make a lot of publicity about it to counteract worldwide Tibetan demonstrations on the day of March 10.

I want to say something about—the first part of my paper is about the Serf's Emancipation Day. Then the second part is China's current policy and new diplomatic offensive. Whenever Chinese foreign ministers or any other officials these days are asked any question about Tibet, they reply that Tibet is not an issue of human rights, ethnicity, or religion, but it is a fundamental issue of China's sovereignty over Tibet. What this means is that they do not believe that the Dalai Lama has really given up independence.

The premise of the Dalai Lama's Middle Path policy is that, by accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, he has eliminated that issue and therefore then you can talk about issues of autonomy, such as human rights, ethnicity, and religion.

What the Chinese are saying is that the Dalai Lama has not really given up independence. The autonomy he wants, they describe as independence, semi-independence, or independence in disguise. They think the autonomy he wants and the area in which he wants to have it, are all means by which he will return to Tibet and then he will drum up Tibetan resistance, and then they will—because they already have this legal status as something separate from fully a part of China, they will build upon that and they will eventually demand national self-determination in international law.

What China is also saying when they say that Tibet is not an issue of human rights, ethnicity, or religion, but it is a fundamental issue of China's sovereignty over Tibet, they are saying that human rights, ethnicity, and religion or autonomy are, in fact, incompatible with Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In the recent dialogues, they have basically told the Tibetans this: we will not talk about autonomy. Tibet already has autonomy. We have our own system we have set up. We liberated Tibet. We emancipated the serfs. Tibetans have full human rights, they have freedom of religion, they have autonomy based upon their ethnicity, and therefore what the Dalai Lama wants cannot be those things. It must be that he really wants independence. Or sometimes they go as far as to say that what he wants is the restoration of the feudal serf system.

So last year after the March riots, it seemed that there was so much international interest in, and support for, Tibet. Several world leaders threatened to boycott the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, and many world leaders told the Chinese that they should dialogue with the Dalai Lama, or with his representatives, and they did so. They had two meetings, one in May and one in July, with no results.

A lot of pressure was put on China because of the demonstrations during the Olympic torch relay. But then there was the earthquake in May, I believe—April—which gained a lot of sympathy for China, and they exploited that to the greatest degree possible, leading to, once they had said that they were willing to dialogue, world leaders, such as French President Sarkozy, saying, okay, we believe you, you are willing to dialogue, so now we withdraw our threats

to not attend the Olympics, the final result being that China thinks that it had a successful Olympics. It thinks it won the propaganda battle about Tibet that began in March.

You could see this after the next dialogue meeting in November. They came out, as Elliot has said, with scornful rejection of dialogue, even going back and saying, you know, these demands you have given us are the same things you were talking about in the early 1980s. We rejected them then, so why do you keep bringing them up?

Since then, there have been statements from the Chinese press saying that China has a new diplomatic strategy. They will define Tibet as their core interest. They initiated this with French President Sarkozy, again, and also in November when he met with the Dalai Lama, not even in France, but in Poland, on the sidelines of a Nobel Prizewinners' meeting, thinking that that would not be too offensive to the Chinese.

They responded by canceling a very important economic summit meeting of all European leaders with China, which was really astounding because they were saying, we have upgraded the importance of this Tibet issue in our international relations; they are saying that there will be a price to pay if you meet with the Dalai Lama. There have been some recent statements. They are saying that Western nations should recognize that Tibet is an inalienable part of China, and stop interfering if they want to remain on good terms with China.

They have a new strategy of coercion. It is going to be hard for any country in the world to resist this new strategy. I suggest at the end of my paper that China has said that it will not dialogue with the Dalai Lama about Tibetan autonomy.

This might be the time to shift away from a policy of continually trying to promote dialogue, because they have said that they will not dialogue, and going to a more defensive strategy to try to counteract what is going to be a major Chinese attempt to prevent anybody anywhere from meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Thank you.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you, Warren Smith.

We are now going to turn to the audience for questions. I know many of you have tremendous expertise or experience inside Tibet and China.

Before we go to the audience, I want to introduce our Senior Advisor on Tibet, Steve Marshall. He is also the CECC's Prisoner Database Program Director. I encourage all of you to go to our Web site and see the PPD, Political Prisoner Database, in operation.

Steve, please, first question?

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith appears in the appendix.]

Mr. MARSHALL. I've enjoyed every word that you've said. Very interesting and very timely. If anyone was looking at the paper this morning, you may have noticed that Wen Jiabao said today, in China, that the door is still open to dialogue with the Dalai Lama, but the Dalai Lama has to renounce separatism. It would seem that no matter how many times the Dalai Lama says that he is not seeking any form of independence for Tibet, disguised or not disguised, the Chinese leaders keep saying this to him.

Now, in the November memorandum that the Dalai Lama's envoys handed over to Communist Party officials, they made a very interesting change, a revision in wording. Instead of saying that they are seeking unification of "traditional Tibet" to be autonomous, the memorandum specifically states that they are seeking the unification of the areas that China already identifies as Tibetan autonomous.

Now, to specifically recognize the areas that China has already identified as Tibetan autonomous, and have that status under Chinese sovereignty, that is not separatism. I would welcome comments from all of you on this. Does a change in key wording reflecting Tibetan territory, would that make any progress toward satisfying the Chinese leadership's demand that the Dalai Lama not be a separatist? Or will they simply continue to dismiss whatever he says, no matter what he says? Thank you.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. This is a great question. I would ask our panelists to respond in simple language, because it is a very complex question. Elliot, take a crack, please.

Mr. SPERLING. Okay. Well, there is a lot there, so excuse me if I speak very quickly so I can get in as much as I can. But this whole business that the Dalai Lama has to renounce sovereignty, he has to renounce separatism, rather, again and again—I have said this in many places, and I will just repeat it here: you have a process whereby the Dalai Lama says, I accept that Tibet is a part of China, I don't want to separate it, I don't want independence, et cetera, and the Chinese Government says, no, the Dalai Lama is not sincere. As Warren said, they term it "disguised independence," or whatever.

The Dalai Lama then comes back and says, China doesn't understand me, and he makes it clearer and clearer and clearer. This is a Chinese policy which has basically served to undermine the Tibetan position, and I think it's a great policy. If I were a member of the Chinese Government, I'd be all for it.

What it does is, it undermines the legitimacy of nationalist sentiment in Tibet by having the Dalai Lama become the premier spokesperson against Tibetan independence, against Tibetan nationalism. And so the Chinese Government says that the Dalai Lama has to say this sincerely, and he goes to Bill Clinton, he goes to George Bush, he goes to Tony Blair, Angela Merkel, and he says, I don't want independence, I don't want independence., And he's basically undercut that notion and made it seem like a very extreme position, even though when you look at the demonstrations, peaceful demonstrations, you see that this nationalist sentiment is out there.

So when the Dalai Lama says China doesn't understand, I really don't want independence, they do understand. I have said this before. There are, I guess, thousands of people working either in the foreign ministry or working on nationality affairs within China. They parse every word that the Dalai Lama says.

If I can put it into accessible language, China knows what the meaning of the word "is" is when it comes to the Dalai Lama. So the idea that they just don't understand what he's saying, and that he has to renounce separatism: this is just another in this string of moves which drags it all along, because China is waiting. The

policy is to wait for the Dalai Lama to pass away. So, these are measures to buy time.

That was the problem with the whole dialogue process. In other words, the dialogue process was entered into as a means of dragging it all out, walking a proposal to death, if you will. I'm not against dialogue, people talking, but it was clear, many years ago, that this was not a dialogue that was being entered into sincerely by both parties; rather, on the part of one party it was a tactic to drag things out to irresolution until the Dalai Lama passes away. As you know, he's in his seventies now. I find it hard to believe that anything is going to come of it when China seems to be so close to the goal. I will stop with this and let the other panelists jump in.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you.

Tseten Wangchuk, please.

Mr. WANGCHUK. I think in many ways I agree with Professor Sperling, that what the Dalai Lama says may not make much difference right now. The reasons, really, that China is not able to come to some sort of a realization about having an alternative policy toward Tibet is, by and large, determined by the Chinese political system right now, by the political atmosphere in China.

At that particular time, I think it was a matter of what the Dalai Lama said. China will not let him come back. He said he didn't want anything. "I just want to come to Beijing, just visit. I don't want anything. I'll give up everything," he said. I don't think that China will accept even that.

Related to that point, I think when we are looking at Tibetan issues, I think we tend to always look at how the Dalai Lama is interacting with the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government encourages that, too. This is "the" Tibetan issue. I think we have to realize that this is a "part" of the Tibetan issue.

There is another part of the issue that is very important—in some ways much more important—and that is the politics within Tibet, and how China manages those Tibetan places. Why were there demonstrations? Of course, there is the nationalist Tibetan sentiment. Of course, there is the Dalai Lama, and related issues. But also you have to see the economic policies that have an impact in Tibet, and you have to see, if you look really closely, that the people who staged those demonstrations in Lhasa are the people who are really marginalized. They are the weak groups. You can see many instances like this in China.

This, combined with the Tibetan nationalist sentiment, and all those other matters, when they are combined together, this is becoming what we call "the Tibet issue." People, both outside and inside of China, and China's Government, tend to ignore that aspect of it. It seems that the government instead blames everything on the Dalai Lama.

We also tend to see as the only solution the talks between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government, whether the talks will succeed or not. I think you really have to see that China has to manage Tibet—with or without the Dalai Lama. If the government is not able to effectively manage Tibet, and to give Tibetans at least some dignity, then the problem is always going to be there.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you.

Did you want to say something really quickly?

Mr. SMITH. The answer to Steve's question is no.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. I like that: simple. That's good.

Mr. SMITH. It will not make any difference that they have more accurately defined now the territorial limits of what they mean by the Greater Tibetan Autonomous Region. Before, in the past, it has been rather vague what Tibetans were talking about, because there was a map produced in Dharamsala that includes everything, all parts of the Tibetan empire of the 7th century, which is very expansive.

This is what China says when they say the Dalai Lama claims 25 percent of Chinese territory. It is only logical, if they ever got to actual talks, that the Tibetans would define what they meant as just the boundaries of the already-designated Tibetan Autonomous Region and Districts. So I am glad to see that Dharamsala has clearly defined that at last, but I don't think it's going to make any difference. As everyone else has said, you can see the different reasons that China uses to claim that the Dalai Lama has not met their conditions, and therefore they will not dialogue with him. In May, I think it was, their demands were called "The Three Stops": the Dalai Lama should stop instigating violence in Tibet, he should stop sabotaging the Olympics, and he should stop all his separatist activities.

So then when they had the meeting in July, the Dalai Lama's representative said, okay, we stopped all those. So then the Chinese side came up with the "Four Non-supports" policy; that he should not support anybody else who might instigate violence in Tibet, or sabotage the Olympics, or do any separatist activities, and he should not support the Tibetan Youth Congress. That was the fourth.

So it got redefined from what he himself might do to what he might support, and therefore anything anybody did, they would accuse him of having supported it because they assumed that he has the authority to tell anyone what to do.

So now it is just a means to say that—in the meeting in November they said, "Well, there were demonstrations all over the world on the beginning day of the Olympics, so you didn't adhere to our conditions that you stop all that." So there's always an excuse. Then they very frankly just say, "No, we're not going to dialogue. We never intended to dialogue about anything but the Dalai Lama's personal status in the first place."

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you.

Elliot, do you have a few brief remarks?

Mr. SPERLING. I just wanted to add something with regard to this business of including all of these autonomous units from other areas in a Greater Tibetan Autonomous Region. They are delineated and you can find them on maps as Tibet Autonomous Prefectures and Tibetan Autonomous Counties. Outside the Tibet Autonomous Region they are contiguous, but the dispute over including them also highlights differences in understanding on the part of the Tibetans and on the part of China.

At the very beginning, the Tibetans said that all of these areas should be included in Tibet because they are inhabited by Tibetans. They are one people. After all, the Chinese have even given special

privileges to Hong Kong in which all are Chinese; here you take an area which is Chinese and you give them special privileges.

The lack of understanding on the part of the Tibetans in this is that in China, there have been many changes over the last several decades and there have been theories, pronouncements, and explanations which account for these, starting with Deng Xiaoping's, "To Get Rich is Glorious," "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, it's whether it catches mice," et cetera. These have helped change economic circumstances and situations: substitute theories.

Nothing has really come about to change the rationale for the control of Tibet beyond old, if I may say, Paleo-Maoist ideas about the inevitable course of history and about history developing along socioeconomic lines of development in which the national identity of people is superficial while it is their socioeconomic circumstances that count. So even though the people in Hong Kong are Chinese, they have a different socioeconomic history and therefore that is what is more important. Their class society is more important. This is an old, again, Paleo-Maoist idea.

The fact that the area that is the TAR, the Tibet Autonomous Region, was under the Dalai Lama's government and these other Tibetan autonomous units were not, makes them different in terms of class society and economics, and therefore they should not be combined together. This is an old idea. Nothing has come along to replace it. So with regard to Tibet and nationality policy, sometimes you feel like you are going into a time warp. You feel like you are in a China that has advanced beyond simple Maoist models of socialism; yet you still find the very simplistic theories that relate to nationalities being applied in these areas.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Terrific. Thank you very much.

Now to the audience. Please stand if you would like to ask questions. State your professional affiliation, if you would like. If you don't, that's fine. And please, just direct your question to one panelist so we can increase the volume of questions from the audience.

Susette Cooke from Australia. We're very lucky to have you here.

Ms. COOKE. I'm Susette Cooke, China Research Centre, University of Technology, Sydney.

First of all, thank you very much to the panelists for your incisive comments. I feel very lucky to be here to hear you today. My question really—

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. For one person.

Ms. COOKE [continuing]. —relates to Tseten Wangchuk's testimony. You've already raised these matters, but I was hoping you might expand a little more on them. Given the core importance to Tibet's future of decisions made by the Chinese leadership, are there really seriously divergent views within that leadership about how to handle Tibet, the Tibetan question, into the future? If there are, could you expand a little more on what some of those views might consist of, and also what might be influencing them?

Mr. WANGCHUK. Well, I don't think anybody outside really knows exactly what kind of conversation they're having inside. I don't think anybody knows. But what I understand is what I would call something like two factions having a debate. Since last year there is something new about the sort of people who relate to Tibet. This is because the Tibetan issue has become such an important issue

that more people outside of the Tibetan field, people in charge of Tibetan-related issues, those additional people have started asking a lot of questions about Tibet. Combined with them are other people who really have a lot of influence on China's minority policy, including some scholars. They have started airing their differences on Tibetan issues.

For example, there is one scholar who has raised the issue that China may be over-emphasizing the role of sovereignty in all these issues. Perhaps we should be minimizing this, and instead be looking into economic issues and the religion issue.

There's another scholar from Beijing University, his name is Mai Lung, who is very influential. He is one of the three most influential Chinese scholars on minority policy. He recently published an article. He thinks that China has to depoliticize Tibetan issues, and instead emphasize citizens' rights. Views like these are different; they are counter to the current policy, as you can see. I have heard that a lot of people are really critical of, for example, the Communist Party sector in the TAR. Some instances of criticism like that really do happen. But I don't think they have enough power to have real impact on the policy right now.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Okay. Great. Thank you.

Please? Thank you. We are very honored to have you.

Mr. DORJE. My name is Kharma Dorje.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Kharma Dorje from VOA.

Mr. DORJE. No, Radio Free Asia.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Radio Free Asia.

Mr. DORJE. I just have a comment and a question. Now, Tseten Wangchuk said that the Lhasa, in 2008, were the peaceful protests. Can you hear me?

Mr. WANGCHUK. Yes.

Mr. DORJE. He said it's a little different from the past. But I just want to respectfully differ a little bit from that. The protests that took place in 2008, starting from March 10, were very different in many ways. One issue which Tseten—

Mr. WANGCHUK. Just to clarify, I'm saying they were different in how the Chinese treated the demonstration.

Mr. DORJE. Right. Exactly.

Mr. WANGCHUK. Yes. Not the demonstrations themselves.

Mr. DORJE. That is the one issue—definitely. That's one of the major issues, how they took advantage of the situation.

But in terms of, if you look in the past—for example, in 1989, there was a protest in Tibet, too. But in terms of the number of participants, in terms of areas covered by the protest, in terms of the age variety of the participants, in terms of how they express and how they protest, kind of spread slowly from Lhasa, then to the outskirts of Lhasa, and then it went all the way to Amdo, then to Kam.

Now, Elliot made a reference earlier, saying that there is a kind of an understanding that the TAR, which has been under the control of the Dalai Lama, and outside is not exactly under the control of the Dalai Lama. But this time, like because of 2008, the protest by the Tibetans inside Tibet, had completely broken out this kind of notion that the Tibetan areas outside of the TAR are not a part of Tibet. That is completely broken, no matter how China tried to

portray an impression that Tibet is only the TAR. So that impression is completely broken down. This is just a comment.

My question is, I think the main issue, the issue for the debate, is: is China really promoting stability in Tibet? So, now, the question of stability is something—I can define how China looks at stability, how the Tibetans look at stability.

Now, for the Chinese, when they say stability, it means when the Tibetans don't protest, when Tibetans don't create any problems, when they say everything's okay, everyone's happy. So that's what stability—I guess that's what they will understand.

But for the Tibetans, stability is very different because what we say is, Tibetans need a share in economic activities, Tibetans need a role in maintaining the Tibetan culture, they want a say in political issues.

So these are two different definitions of stability. So I just want to ask to all panel members, if they can address whether really China managed to promote stability in Tibet?

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Can one of you take that question?

Mr. SMITH. Yes. The stability question, that's the question of this roundtable. I think the assumption is that stability can't be created without autonomy. I think it's just the opposite. I think the Chinese have decided that autonomy is the problem. They have history to back them up on this. They allowed a little bit of autonomy in the policy in 1957, and they believe that led to the revolt in 1959. They had a policy of allowing a little autonomy in the 1980s, and they believe that led to the demonstrations and riots from 1987 to 1989.

They see that autonomy allows for some Tibet culture, all of which is connected to Tibetan national identity and all of which eventuates in Tibetan separatism. So they see autonomy as something that they can't have. For China, stability does not mean making Tibetans happy. I don't think they care a bit about whether or not Tibetans are happy. What they want, is access to the Tibetan territory and they think they can create stability by means of repression, by denial of autonomy, and ultimately by economic development, which is facilitated by, and supports, colonization.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thanks.

Todd Stein, please? Do you want your professional affiliation—International Campaign for Tibet—used.

Mr. STEIN. Thanks, Charlotte.

My question is for Dr. Sperling. You have criticized U.S. policy for seeing Tibet too much as a religious freedom issue and not recognizing enough the underlying forces. The dialogue that has been going on for the last six years has sort of been deemed a dead end, if I can say that, by the commentators, certainly by the Chinese officials who made clear it is back at square one.

In the final paragraph of your statement, you say that the State Department, Secretary Clinton, should commit to a forceful human rights agenda and continue to make the Chinese uncomfortable about the abuses going on there.

I wondered if not focusing enough on the nationalist aspect, which is another way to stay focused on Tibet as a political issue, is that recommendation for Secretary Clinton sufficient to address the political issue? If the dialogue as currently constructed should

not be pursued, how does U.S. policy address in the medium term, let's say, or even short term, the underlying nationalist causes of the unrest?

Mr. SPERLING. All that I'm saying—and again, I want to stress this—it is the policy of the Dalai Lama, most importantly, to keep Tibet as a part of China, and therefore that is the policy of the U.S. Government. So all I am saying is, with regard to these nationalist sentiments, that Tibetans have every right to express them peacefully.

When Tibetans express those sentiments peacefully and are detained, arrested, imprisoned, and certainly tortured, the U.S. Government must speak out forcefully against that at every opportunity. I am looking at things that can be done which I think are feasible, because all too often we make demands—and, you know, these are very serious issues—we make demands that something be done, and as a result, our political leaders then make threats on which they are simply unwilling to follow through. I think what I am saying is just a basic prescription, in line with our own principles, that we need to follow.

Now, if you are asking, is that going to accomplish anything, I think China is actually very sensitive and remains very sensitive to foreign criticism, and has gone to great lengths to counter it. In fact, the sort of arguments you get about Tibet now sometimes seem actually rather highly emotional and almost irrational in that sense, and I think they reflect China's discomfort over the Tibet issue. I think this is something that we can certainly work with.

Mr. STEIN. Thank you. If I may just very quickly follow up, yesterday the statement from the White House said that President Obama had—well, I don't have it. It basically cited the lack of progress in the dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama. Do you see that as still within the confines of the dialogue, but do you see, given that it was with the foreign minister, see that as causing at least a sufficient level of discomfort in the current environment?

Mr. SPERLING. I'm somewhat torn about that, because I think that the dialogue process has basically been used as a sop. In other words, whenever you get criticism like that, generally in response to it—and we have seen this over the last two years—there's some sort of meeting. The Tibetans, ever hopeful, often come out at the end of the meeting saying, well, it was very good because we got to express our opinions, or something along those lines: "We made our views very clear, we had an understanding of where they stand, where we stand, and this is all very good." But this has been going on for 30 years.

So I think in terms of being aware that there is a terrible situation in Tibet, that's fine, but it's not enough. The dialogue process itself, again, as I said, has been used by China as a means of forestalling such criticism. So when there is this criticism, then there will be a meeting and everybody will say, "We are very glad that China is meeting with the Dalai Lama's representatives," and then nothing happens, and another year, and another year goes by and the Dalai Lama gets older—there is an awareness of the Dalai Lama's health problems—and China simply bides its time.

As I said before, if I were a member of the Chinese Government, I would think that was a great policy. Unfortunately, the Tibetans—the Tibet government in exile, that is—have also gone along and tried to pin their hopes on this dialogue process. I think they have over-sold it, so in a sense they are partly the authors of this problem as well.

That's where I think you have this shock on the part of people who have listened to the Dalai Lama's March 10 statement who say, "Well, this is so different from what we've heard before." I think there's a realization at least on the part of some people in the Dalai Lama's exile administration, that they've been led down a rosy path.

Mr. STEIN. Thank you.

Mr. SPERLING. Sure.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Rules are made to be broken. Tseten Wangchuk wants to add something.

Mr. WANGCHUK. I just want to mention two things. First, in a way, I agree with Professor Sperling that China has an overall strategy to wait the Dalai Lama out, to keep talking to the Tibetan representatives, and just drag out the timeline. But as we know here in Washington, politics have never been very clear and clean, and the process is always complicated. The impacts are very complicated and complex.

As soon as the Chinese invited the Dalai Lama's representative to Beijing in 2008, I think the impact inside of Tibet, domestically, was huge. The Chinese Government knows that, too. In some ways the fact that the Dalai Lama's representative came to Beijing, no matter what they were talking about, even if they were not talking about anything, it still sent out a message to Tibet—and particularly to the Tibetan Party cadres who work for the Chinese Government.

Before that, the Chinese Government had clarity on policy. As soon as the government was talking to the Dalai Lama's representative, no matter what they were talking about, the Tibetan cadres lost their clout, and they knew that. They calculated those things. So it's much more complex than whether someone is cheating, or whether someone is so naive that they didn't understand at all.

Another thing, a point for the U.S. Government, and I say this for a lot of people. I, myself, always say this to people. We are always asking the Chinese Government to talk to the Dalai Lama. Talk to the Dalai Lama. This is very important. The U.S. Government has to encourage that. If there is a way, then encourage the Chinese Government to listen to the Tibetans inside Tibet. The Tibetans are supposed to be China's citizens. But right now, the government criminalizes Tibetans' grievances, criminalizes their requests. Tibetans are not allowed to say anything. This is the cause of the core problem. I think that if the Chinese Government would listen to the Tibetans inside Tibet, they would find that Tibetans have legitimate grievances, legitimate reasons to say these things.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you.

Yes, sir. Can you stand up, please? Can you come to the—I'm sorry. It's just hard to hear you.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT. As a historian, where does, in your view, old Tibet actually fit into contemporary Tibetan national conscious-

ness, and how, if at all, might we see that expressed in resisting the Serf's Emancipation Day?

Mr. WANGCHUK. You mean, Tibet as a whole?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT. Well, I guess you haven't used the term Tibetan national consciousness, Mr. Sperling has.

Mr. WANGCHUK. Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT. So, I understand. I might be directing this to the wrong person. But if you do envision something like that—

Mr. WANGCHUK. Okay. Yes. I grew up in Tibet. Strangely enough, I must say that a few years ago when I went back, I found the sense of Tibetanness is really much stronger than ever before, at least stronger than I have ever seen. I think, in some ways, the Chinese Government is responsible for that. They've identified all of us Tibetans—you have to sign your name, you have to identify yourself as a Tibetan. Tibetans may have different dialects, and some of the dialects—we don't understand each other. But now Tibetans really have a sense of Tibetanness.

Another thing is that, finally, in the past couple of hundred years, there is a sense of "pan-Tibetan." We've always had this religion, this pan-Tibetan religious sense of being Tibetan. But now there's a popular culture with songs, music, and everything. This has happened because of DVDs, because of the I-Pod, because of the cell phone, and all those things. They have really connected all the Tibetans together. Before, you couldn't go to places on the edge of Tibet, like Tung Ding, which is where my father came from 100 years ago—and I know that place—but you can go there now and see these people are starting to build Tibetan buildings, listening to Tibetan songs from Lhasa or Qinghai. I think this is much stronger than ever before.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. That's very interesting.

Doug, did you want to ask something?

Mr. GROB. I'd just like to follow up on one point you mentioned, but direct the question to Professor Smith because it ties in with something that he said earlier. Two parts. On the dialogue, we have not really dug into the dynamics on the other side. If you could comment on the role of the United Front Work Department, and also on what role the politics between the central-versus local-level departments may play in creating a particular dialogue dynamic, that would be illuminating because I think that showed through a bit, at least in our reading of the protests, last year.

In a more general sense, all of our panelists implicitly have hinted at a second question. The title of this roundtable incorporates the question "Is China promoting stability in Tibet?" I wonder if some of your comments suggest, rather, that the core question should be, "Does China *intend* to promote stability in Tibet?" In other words, from the Chinese Government and Party's perspective, is there some "optimal" level of instability, in the way that we hear economists sometimes speak of an "optimal" level of unemployment?

Mr. SMITH. I think China has always had a strategy for creating stability in Tibet, but it hasn't involved autonomy. Autonomy in Marxist theory and then Chinese Communist practice has always

been a temporary tactic until you can achieve control, and then you begin an assimilative process.

Mao actually said openly to Tibetans that Tibet had territory and resources, China had people, and this seemed to him to be the ingredients for a swap that would be mutually advantageous. He said, you give us your territory and your resources and we will give you our people. He said this openly in meetings with Tibetans in the 1950s. Without any consciousness that Tibetans might not think that was a good deal. So that's always been the Chinese consciousness about Tibet.

I think now they tried autonomy a few times. It didn't work. They always intended that Tibet should be integrated and assimilated. It's just taking much longer than they imagined because Tibetan identity is much stronger than they imagined. But they have always had the solution. It's the traditional frontier solution in Chinese politics, and that is, first you create colonies and you establish local potentates as your rulers that you actually control, and then you begin a system of colonization and assimilation.

The Tibetans are one-half of 1 percent of the Chinese population, but their territory is 20 or 25 percent. I think that 20 percent figure is much more important to the Chinese than that one-half of 1 percent. They have the ability to create stability in Tibet by means of repression and they have the people to achieve the ultimate solution, which is colonization. I think that was always the plan. It's not a new plan that's come up because of Tibet resistance, it's just Tibet resistance has delayed that plan.

And as for the United Front and whatever their strategy is, what you read now, coming out of the Chinese spokespersons, is that their new offensive—I think Todd from ICT should—this is directed at you, that you should understand that China has mounted a new offensive on Tibet. They have completely changed their policy on Tibet. They think that they have countered the Tibetan offense. They have pretended to dialogue and it has worked, and now they are going on the offensive.

So I think you cannot back off on your policy of promoting dialogue because that's the Dalai Lama's policy, but you're going to have to try to counter China's new offensive to try to prevent any meetings with the Dalai Lama, and it won't be directed first at the United States. It was directed first at Germany, and then at France. But the word is out that you will pay a very heavy price. They will first exact this price from European countries and other countries, and the United States will be the last country they try this tactic on, and you'd better see it coming.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT. [Off microphone] [Inaudible].

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Matt Nelson from Senator Feinstein's office, and then we'll go to you.

Sir?

Mr. NELSON. Warren, as the person that has said that basically—and you just said it again—the shift in policy should be toward a more defensive posture, what does that mean for Congress, and specifically the framework that Congress has enacted, the Tibet Policy Act? Doesn't it need to be updated? If so, how would you propose that it needs to be updated?

Mr. SMITH. That's a question for Todd and the ICT. I don't know. It's going to be difficult to resist this kind of coercion. In my paper, I said it depends upon the economics, how dependent this country is upon China for economic reasons, how bad the financial crisis becomes and how much China is affected by it. I think you just have to hold the line, in that we will not be coerced. We have the right to meet with the Dalai Lama. But you can see, it's going to be very difficult to do. I mean, it's only last year when George Bush presented the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama. That was the first official meeting. The same thing happened in Germany. It was the first time that the Dalai Lama was received officially.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Not officially. Publicly seen with cameras.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. And before when the Dalai Lama was met in the White House, they did what they called "the drop-by." He was received by the Vice President, and then the President would drop by, or some such arrangement. I think you will see a tendency to go back to that kind of thing. Just like Sarkozy did when the Dalai Lama was in France in August and Sarkozy didn't meet with him then. He sent his wife to meet with him. He only met with him later in Poland, thinking that this would be okay. Well, it wasn't okay. So you're going to see countries trying to do this.

There was a really positive movement by several countries. Canada gave him honorary citizenship. There was a strong movement of countries to receive him at a much higher level than ever before. China did not fail to notice this. They first singled out Germany for economic sanctions and favored France. Then France fell afoul and then they singled out France for sanctions and gave advantages to Germany. So, they are going to play this kind of strategy. I think you are just going to have to really try to hold the line on, we have the right to meet with the Dalai Lama officially, but there's going to be a price to pay.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT. Can I just follow up and say that this—for the congressional staff and administration people in the room, His Holiness is coming to Washington in October. So, put that on your radar screen for how he's received.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. When there's cohesion among parliaments, inter-parliamentary coordination, when governments, the European Union, the United States, talk to each other about these issues, the more likely they are to stand firm.

Mr. SMITH. That is exactly why they singled out just one country, they singled out Germany first and then France, because they know they can't take on everyone.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Right.

Mr. SMITH. They made France pay such a price.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. What was the price though, seriously?

Mr. SMITH. Well, it's hard to know.

What you read from the Chinese press now, is now they think they have more power than before.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Right.

Mr. SMITH. They think they have the advantage. They think they will survive this economic crisis because of their different political system. They will survive better than we will. So they really think that now is the time, and they really have more ability to coerce than ever before.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. I'm sorry. Then we'll close with you, sir. But Elliot, do you want to just jump in? Then we'll—

Mr. SPERLING. Okay. Just very briefly. They know that they have the advantage. They feel that after the successful Olympics, after the attention that is being shown to China in the wake of the global financial crisis—and again, I would refer back to Secretary of State Clinton's remarks—they have the leverage and they are coordinating their policies toward various countries together. This is not haphazard, one country at a time. Warren is absolutely right, this is very well thought through.

What might be optimal, but I don't know if this is a possibility, is for the United States and members of the European Union and other countries that are susceptible to this to have talks at some level. This is not major, but talks at some level aimed toward coordinating responsive policies as well, because this is going to be an issue that is going to be brought up to all of them. So I think some sort of coordination is useful. If I may say so, as a public advocacy organization, ICT does have offices in various parts of the world and perhaps this might be something that it could put on its agenda.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Todd, I think you should leave the room because you've got a lot of work to do. [Laughter.]

Mr. SPERLING. But it should be coordinated. I don't know if that's feasible.

Mr. STEIN. Coordinated.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Todd, you've got a lot of work to do. Excuse me. Thank you.

Mr. TANNEN. I'm Sean Tannen. I'm with the APF News Agency, a journalist. I wanted to get your perspective on the events of this past week, the Chinese foreign minister comment on the congressional resolution on Tibet, and the meeting with Obama, and the foreign minister. This question might be directed best toward Dr. Sperling. Is this also in the history of what you see as empty gestures, empty threats on the part of the United States, trying to get Tibet on the radar screen or to try to pressure China on that? And what is the sense you get from the administration vis-a-vis Tibet? Has there been a change from the last administration?

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Thank you. Did they hear the question? You want me to repeat it real fast?

Mr. SPERLING. Yes. No, no.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Oh, you got it? Okay.

Mr. SPERLING. I don't think that there were any specific threats that were made, so I don't see empty threats here. These are expressions of sentiment more than anything else. Just very briefly, in terms of where the administration is, I was somewhat puzzled by the way in which the State Department statement came out. It seemed to have been released at a very odd hour and not given much publicity.

So I'm starting to wonder if any real work within the Department of State on the Tibet issue has taken place and if people are not at the moment just trying to tread water until they get something in place. We don't have a coordinator for Tibetan affairs and I don't think we even have an assistant secretary for DRL, for Democracy, Rights, and Labor, yet. So I think this is all very prelimi-

nary at the moment, and I'm hesitant to say anything definitive about it.

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. As you mentioned, the DRL position hasn't been filled. The special coordinator for Tibet hasn't been filled. So, I agree with you.

Mr. SPERLING. I think they're looking for somebody who's paid their taxes. [Laughter.]

Ms. OLDHAM-MOORE. Good luck in this town. It's a hard challenge to pass the Administration's very vigorous vetting process.

Thank you so much for coming. On behalf of Senator Dorgan, who is Chairman of the Commission, I am very grateful to you all for joining us, and to Steve Marshall, for putting this roundtable together. You did a fabulous job.

The Commission's reporting on Tibet will continue over the month. On March 26, the Serf's Emancipation Day, we will continue to post analysis on our Web site, as well as the transcript from this roundtable. We appreciate your joining us, and we hope to see you again. We'll have another roundtable the first week of April. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:31 a.m. the roundtable was concluded.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELLIOT SPERLING

MARCH 13, 2009

I would like, at the outset, to express my gratitude to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for inviting me to appear before you today. I have addressed this commission before on the basis of my work on Tibet's history and Tibet's historical and contemporary relations with China. In addition to serving on the faculty of the Department of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University and I have also served as a member of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad (1996–1999).

Over the last several weeks there has been a buildup of tension in Tibet, set against the background of Chinese security measures meant to maintain order and stability. The question before this hearing is whether or not China has established stability in Tibet. The short answer is at this moment by and large yes. But that needs to be qualified by pointing out that the stability in question has been established at the cost of imposing an effective lockdown on Tibet, as some observers have termed it. In addition to the ongoing detention, according to Human Rights Watch, of hundreds of prisoners who have been held since last year, we have reports this year of monasteries blockaded and internet and cell phone use cut over large areas of the Tibetan Plateau. The security presence in Tibetan areas is reportedly high and very visible. So yes, there is stability, but at the price of severe security measures and a population subject in places to severe restrictions on movement and communication.

Part of the measures designed to secure Tibet are also related to the imposition of political education, inside and outside monasteries, meant to reaffirm China's narrative of Tibet's historical place within the Chinese state. This is tied to the fact that discontent in Tibet inevitably centers on the legitimacy of China's presence there. The fact that March 10, which Tibetans observe as an effective national day, is the day on which massive protests began last year (and which was the targeted day for the lockdown this year), with protestors commonly using the forbidden Tibetan flag as their symbol, attest to the nationalist content of Tibetan resentments and grievances. This is not to downplay the other areas of repression; but it is to assert something that this commission should bear in mind. The U.S. Government often likes to view the Tibet issue as largely one of religious or cultural freedom. While there are certainly religious and cultural issues at play, there needs to be some acknowledgement of the underlying nationalist sentiment. We may wish the Tibetans were saying something else, but they're not, and if we wish to understand what's going on in Tibet we need to pay attention to what they are saying.

The Tibetan sentiments I've described need to be seen as a rejection of China's decades-long efforts to control the interpretation of Tibet's history, asserting both for domestic and foreign audiences that Tibet has been a part of China since the 13th century without break, and that claiming otherwise is a distortion of Tibetan history. But the distortion lies elsewhere: Chinese writers did not make such claims until after the 1950s. The general trend in the first half of the 20th century was actually to claim Tibet only since the 18th century. But more to the point, those claims were not that Tibet had been an integral part of China, but rather that it had been a vassal state; i.e., a subject state within an empire. It's hardly surprising, that Tibetans view the end that China put to Tibet's independence as an act of unprovoked aggression. At a minimum we too have to acknowledge that history contradicts modern Chinese assertions.

Given these facts, we may better understand that we are now seeing a contest over historical time in Tibet. Last month we saw a struggle over celebration and commemoration vis-a-vis Tibetan New Year. A mass movement to demonstrate respect and mourning for those who lost their lives in the protests a year ago by not celebrating the New Year (which fell this year on February 25), rippled successfully across the Tibetan Plateau and the Tibetan exile community. China tried to cajole and force celebrations, but largely without success.

Now March is with us, and the struggle is between the Tibetan adherence to marking March 10 as a national day (which is precisely what precipitated the mass demonstrations and protests last year) and China's determination to purge the month of any such significance by instituting instead a new holiday: March 28, Serfs Emancipation Day. There is no doubt that March 10, which came and went three days ago, was stifled, with tremendous effort by the Chinese authorities. But the

manner in which it was done must certainly have nurtured further resentments and grievances. Indeed, the arrests and deaths of Tibetans in previous March 10 incidents (including last year's) only serve to strengthen the resonance of the struggle that the date represents and link later generations to the history of March 10, 1959. As for the new holiday, there is no question that it will only be realized by coercive government dictate.

The creation of this new holiday is relevant to our understanding of the collapse of talks between The Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government in November. Many understood that those talks were long-doomed; meant only to drag on until the Dalai Lama's death, when China would select its own Dalai Lama and, so it believes, resolve the Tibet issue. After these last talks ended the Tibetan delegates returned to India, vowing to make no statement before a Special Meeting convened in Dharamsala. But there was no need for them to speak. Within days, their Chinese counterparts held a press conference and said the talks had gone nowhere. They rejected any compromise with the Dalai Lama on any of his proposals about the nature of autonomy within Tibet and stated that, while the door was open for him to return, he would have to recognize the errors of his ways. After almost thirty years of contacts China signaled that they had never advanced beyond square one.

Significantly, in 1981 Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang asserted to the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup, that "There should be no more quibbling about past history, namely the events of 1959. Let us disregard and forget this." And in its dealings with the Dalai Lama's exile government China operated under that premise. China's decision to recognize and commemorate March 28, 1959 as Serfs Emancipation Day put 1959 back on the table and signaled that the talks really are at a dead-end. But that was already clear.

So what might the United States do in these circumstances? We are all aware of Secretary of State Clinton's February 21st statement that human rights concerns about China "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis, and the security crisis." While such comments are unhelpful, the feckless policies and empty threats over Tibet that have been made in the past are the real problem. Under Bill Clinton, revocation of Most Favored Nation trade status (or PNTR) was periodically threatened to no effect, while George Bush, for his part would not even make the symbolic gesture of skipping the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

The fact is, Secretary of State Clinton simply articulated the real nature of U.S.-China policy. The Obama administration certainly cannot be expected to act on the nationalist sentiments of Tibetans, especially when the Dalai Lama's and U.S. policy has long been to recognize Tibet as a part of China. The Secretary of State could continue making the empty gestures of advocating simple religious freedom and urging more talks; or she could adopt the cynical position advocated by Nicolas Kristoff, that Tibetans should accept one-party Communist rule and some sort of "cultural autonomy," leaving democratic aspirations out of the picture. These two options are hardly satisfactory.

What she and the administration absolutely mustn't do is add to the history of empty threats over Tibet. But they can address Chinese abuses in Tibet in every reasonable forum, strongly and without apology. Secretary of State Clinton can make China deservedly uncomfortable without the unrealistic threats; but she has to commit to a forceful human rights agenda. She should not fool herself that the issue is simply a religious one. She has to understand what it is that motivates Tibetan protest, and even though the administration might wish Tibetan aspirations were not nationalist in nature, it must support, in absolute terms, the right of Tibetans to voice their aspirations peacefully. These are things she can do. Or, she can reiterate once more, if anyone didn't hear it the first time, that human rights in China will not be treated seriously until the crises in global warming, finance and security are solved.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WARREN W. SMITH

MARCH 13, 2009

The Tibetan revolt that culminated in Lhasa on 10 March 1959 began in eastern Tibet in 1956 in response to China's so-called Democratic Reforms instituted there but not in Central Tibet. The Lhasa revolt resulted in the flight of the Dalai Lama on 17 March 1959 and China's dissolution by proclamation of the former Tibetan Government on 28 March. On 31 March the Chinese organized a "spontaneous demonstration" of Tibetans in Lhasa to condemn the revolt and to support the "people's government." Similar rallies "spontaneously" occurred at several other places in

Tibet at the same time and expressed unanimous themes of condemnation of the rebels and support for the PLA. "Patriotic and progressive" Tibetans parroted CCP slogans emphasizing the class rather than national nature of the revolt and the interests of Tibetans in preserving their "national unity" within China. Also praised were the forbearance of the people's government in tolerating, against the actual wishes of the people, the upper strata's opposition to social reform, and the PLA's restraint in quelling the revolt.

These rallies were intended to counteract the popular demonstrations in Lhasa accompanying the revolt, particularly the organization of a "People's Assembly" on 10 March that had declared Tibet's independence and a "Women's March" on the 12th. "Democratic Reforms," by means of which the Tibetan serfs were supposedly emancipated, were not initiated until July. Nevertheless, the Chinese Government has decided to celebrate 28 March, the date that the "Tibetan local government" was dissolved, as "Serf Emancipation Day." The fact that 28 March was chosen, rather than 2 July, the day that the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region announced the Democratic Reforms, indicates that Serf Emancipation Day is intended as counter-propaganda to the uprising of 2008, as the 31 March 1959 demonstrations were counter-propaganda to the uprising of 1959.

Serf Emancipation Day was announced as a celebration intended to "strengthen Tibetans' patriotism and expose the Dalai clique." The Democratic Reform by which the serfs were supposedly emancipated was said to be "the people's revolutionary movement, in which the Party led the one million Tibetan serfs to topple the dark rule of the serf owner class." The emancipation of the Tibetan serfs was also equated with the emancipation of the slaves during the American Civil War. Other commentaries hailed the liberation of the Tibetan serfs as "a milestone in the world history of human rights." The event was put into the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." By recalling the past and comparing it with the present Tibetans were supposed to see "a sharp contrast between the evil history of old Tibet when the human rights were trampled on and today when every one is entitled to equal rights." The celebration was preceded by many testimonies by former serfs as well as other propaganda, including a film on the suffering of the serfs and an exhibition in Beijing intended to show "the darkness and backwardness of old Tibet and the development and progress of new Tibet in a touching and tremendously convincing display."

Such propaganda has long been a prominent part of Chinese policy on Tibet. Some of the most notorious examples of this type of propaganda are the famous film, *Serf*, and the museum exhibit in Lhasa, "The Wrath of the Serfs." The *Serf* film, produced by a PLA film company in the 1960s, paints a dark picture of suffering serfs before liberation by the PLA, whom they supposedly called the "Army of Bodhisattvas." It was shown all over China and had a significant influence on Chinese audiences in the formation of their opinions about Tibet and the Chinese role there. It was in many cases the only source for many Chinese in forming their impressions about Tibet.

The "Wrath of the Serfs" museum exhibit was created in Lhasa in the early 1970s by Chinese art students. It contained a series of 106 life-like clay sculptures of serfs in all of their sufferings. The exhibit lasted only until the reform period began in 1979, but during the 1970's it was required viewing for all Tibetan school children. There were smaller museums in other places, particularly in the former dungeon of the Potala, the old Lhasa jail and at several former manor houses in rural areas. All had examples of torture implements used on the serfs and photos of serfs and beggars in poor condition. Another propaganda tactic was the public recitations of former serfs of their sufferings. Some former serfs, their stories suitably elaborated, became semi-professional performers who were taken around to almost all Tibetan villages and towns.

The popularity of the evils of the serf system theme for the Chinese is explained by the fact that it obscures the other issue of Tibet, the political issue of the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Tibet. China claims that there is no such political issue, Tibet having "always" been a part of China. The popularity of the serf issue for the Chinese is not only because it obscures the political issue but because it is one of the fundamental tenets of Communist liberation ideology. Marx held that economic conditions determined political consciousness, or, in other words, that class issues were predominant over national issues and proletarian internationalism would prevail over nationalism.

In the PRC the class theory of nationalism was taken to the point that a slogan, attributed to Mao, "the national issue is in essence a class issue," characterized the most leftist periods of PRC history and the periods when assimilation of nationalities was most openly pursued. According to this ideology the interests of the work-

ing class of any nationality should reside with the multinational proletariat rather than with its own exploitative upper class. In Tibet, the serfs should identify with their liberators, the Chinese workers represented by the CCP, rather than with their own aristocracy, feudal government or religious establishment. The Chinese Communists seem to have imagined that this would really happen, that the Tibetan serfs would support the CCP in overthrowing their own ruling class. Some former serfs who were elevated to high positions without power did so. However, the failure of the "Tibetan masses" to support the Chinese was obscured with propaganda that they actually did. Thus, in regard to the suppression of the revolt and institution of "Democratic Reforms," Chinese propaganda claims that this was all done by the Tibetans themselves who had "stood on their own feet" and achieved "self-rule."

Where the Chinese Communists miscalculated was in underestimating the strength and persistence of Tibetan culture and national identity. The Communists' ideology told them that nationalism was a phenomenon of a former period of history that would be superseded by the advent of Socialism. They believed that their nationality policies, perfected by Lenin and Stalin, would defuse nationalities' resistance until they could be seduced by the attractions of Chinese culture and the advantages of the socialist system. And they had a typically Chinese chauvinistic opinion of Tibetan culture, which they regarded as really no culture at all. They therefore had little understanding why any Tibetans would want to retain or preserve their "barbaric" culture, and they could imagine no reason for the persistence of Tibetan national identity or nationalism except as manipulated by foreign influences. China miscalculated the ease with which it would be able to annex and assimilate Tibet. Propaganda was used both to promote assimilation and to conceal its failures.

In order to justify the ideology that foreign rule is preferable to self-rule by its own upper class, the Tibetan "feudal serf system" has to be portrayed in the worst light. Thus, Chinese propaganda resorts to the most negative depictions of the "Hell on Earth" that they claim was old Tibet before "liberation." Chinese propaganda depicts the sufferings of the "serfs and slaves" as unrestricted by any rules or traditions and unrestrained by any religious morality or human compassion. Chinese depictions of the absolute evils of old Tibet are so fantastic as to be preposterous. Certainly they do not accord with an image of Tibet consistent with the ideals of Buddhism or with the accounts of those travelers who reached Tibet before 1950. Several foreigners undertook heroic and lifelong attempts to visit Tibet and those who were successful usually wrote accounts of their travels. In none of these is Tibet pictured as the "Hell on Earth" of Chinese propaganda.

The Italian scholar and Buddhist, Guiseppi Tucci, travelled thousands of miles, mostly on foot, across Tibet during eight visits between 1927 and 1948. During this period almost no Chinese travelled so extensively in Tibet. Tucci was the founder of Tibetan academic studies and is uniquely qualified to comment on what Tibet was like before the Chinese invasion. He wrote:

On a likely estimate, 30 percent of the landed property belonged to the state, 40 percent to the monasteries, and the rest to the nobility. Usually, the relation between the landlord and his dependents was fairly humane. Caste did not exist in Tibet, and in religion all found that equality which poverty or social customs denied them. Monastery life was open to all, and even if the love of all living creatures and the spirit of sacrifice for the suffering, inculcated by Buddhism, remained generally theoretical, a fundamental humanity governed social relations throughout the country.

Chinese depictions of the events of March 1959 are similarly distorted for propaganda purposes. The Tibetan revolt was not a "revolt of serf owners," who were against reforms. In Central Tibet the reform program had been postponed by Mao in 1957; therefore, the serf-owners had no reason to revolt at that particular time. The Tibetan serfs were not demanding "Democratic Reforms" nor did they rise up in revolt against the feudal serf system. Democratic Reforms were also not what the Chinese claimed. The main principles of democratic reforms were redistribution of wealth and class divisions leading to class struggle. Redistribution of wealth involved the division of feudal estates, with the serfs acquiring title to the land. Class divisions and class struggle were intended to liberate the serfs' mentality from the class oppression of the feudal system. However, the lands the serfs acquired were soon confiscated again under the rubric of "socialist transformation" and collectivization. Class divisions and class struggle were employed to identify and repress all opponents to Chinese control. Tibetans were forced to endure intensive investigative processes to ascertain their loyalties and opinions and they had to denounce each other as exploiters or reactionaries or counterrevolutionaries, which allowed the Chinese to turn Tibetans against each other and to identify those willing to cooperate and those less than willing. It was this repressive aspect that was revealed by

the CCP's characterization of Democratic Reforms as part of the repression of the revolt and Tibetan resistance.

An aspect of the redistribution of wealth during Democratic Reforms was that all property now theoretically belonged to "the people." Tibetans were told that "the people" were Han and Tibetan without distinction. Thus Tibetans had to support the Han in Tibet. Tibetans also had to support the people in other provinces who were suffering from famine due to the Great Leap Forward of 1959–61. Grain was exported from Tibet even though thousands of Tibetans also died of starvation at this time, as was described by the Panchen Lama in 1962 in his petition to the Chinese leaders. One of the most culturally destructive effects of Democratic Reforms was also the result of the "redistribution of wealth" principle. In the three years of Democratic Reforms almost all temples and monasteries were closed. Some were closed due to their participation in or support of the revolt. Many monks and nuns fled to India, further depopulating the monasteries. Virtually all of the remaining monks were forced to secularize under the "freedom of religion" aspect of Democratic Reforms, meaning that monks and nuns whom the Chinese claimed had been forced into a religious life now had the freedom to leave.

As monasteries were depopulated and closed they were systematically looted by Chinese state agencies. The most valuable artifacts were identified by art experts and metallurgists in advance. Then, the relics of each monastery were removed and trucked to China. The most valuable articles were taken first and then all articles of metal were taken to China where they were melted down. Many of the most precious and valuable Tibetan sculptures and paintings disappeared, only some of which ultimately reappeared on the international art market. All of this was justified according to the principle of redistribution of wealth to all of the people. The wealth of Tibet belonged not just to the Tibetan people, for whom it was the expression of their national culture, but to all the Chinese people, of whom Tibetans were claimed to be a part. The Chinese Communist Party claimed that it represented the people; therefore, it felt justified in confiscating the wealth of Tibet for its own purposes. Under the rubric of Democratic Reforms, Tibet's national wealth was looted for the benefit of the Chinese state and Tibet's culture was irreparably damaged. The magnitude of this disaster for Tibetan culture was increased because of the fact that almost all Tibetan artistic and cultural expression was devoted to Buddhist art; Tibetan cultural wealth and wisdom was devoted to Buddhist scholasticism, all of which was destroyed.

Far from being the emancipation of the Tibetan serfs, Democratic Reforms were the means by which the Chinese enforced their control over Tibet, identified and repressed any opponents and significantly destroyed the symbols of Tibetan culture and national identity. Now China insists that Tibetans must celebrate the day that their self-constituted government was dissolved as the day of their emancipation, and it will use all its coercive powers to make them do so.

China's declaration and celebration of a "Serf Emancipation Day" is, like many aspects of Chinese policy in Tibet, intended for propaganda purposes, both to "educate" Tibetans and to propagandize the outside world. The class theme of China's justifications for its rule over Tibet has become the most fundamental of its arguments. It is China's denial of Tibetan self-determination that the class argument is employed to obscure. If Tibet before "liberation" can be depicted as an orgy of suffering, then perhaps Chinese rule can be justified. However, in order to achieve this, the evils of old Tibet have to be exaggerated to the point of absurdity. No society could have been as awful as Tibet is portrayed by the Chinese. And no one but the Chinese, few if any of whom had any knowledge of Tibet before 1950, describes it in this way. The Chinese motive in denigrating Tibetan society in such terms is obviously to justify the "liberation" of Tibet and the imposition of Chinese rule over a non-Chinese people. This is China's favorite argument because it obscures the real issue and it is founded upon real inequalities in old Tibetan society. If China can confine the argument to the question of what old Tibet was really like then China thinks it can win the debate about Tibet.

CHINA'S CURRENT POLICY AND NEW DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE

China's current policy on Tibet, as invariably expressed by its officials and spokespersons, is that Tibet is not an issue of "human rights, ethnicity or religion," but rather a fundamental issue of China's sovereignty over Tibet. What this means is that China does not believe that the Dalai Lama has really given up independence. The Dalai Lama's Middle Path policy, by accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, assumes that other issues of Tibetan autonomy, like human rights, ethnicity and religion, can then be discussed. However, the Chinese maintain that the Dalai Lama really wants independence or "semi-independence" or "independence in disguise."

His proposal for “genuine autonomy” and a “greater Tibetan autonomous region” are the means by which he denies Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and intends to eventually seek Tibetan independence under the principle of national self-determination. China says that Tibetans already have autonomy based upon their ethnicity and they have human rights and freedom of religion; therefore, these are not subjects for discussion. These issues have already been resolved by Tibet’s “liberation” and “democratic reforms.”

What the Dalai Lama really wants, then, is the restoration of the feudal serf system and his own rule. What China does not want is any real autonomy in Tibet, under the Dalai Lama or not, because autonomy would allow for the survival of Tibetan culture and national identity upon which Tibetan separatism is based. China’s experience has been that whenever it has allowed even minimal autonomy it has led to a revival of Tibetan separatism. China believes that its retrenchment policy in 1957 led to the 1959 revolt and its liberalization during the 1980s led to the riots of 1987–89. In contrast to foreign critics who wonder why China does not realize that autonomy is in China’s best interest, and that only autonomy can create real stability in Tibet, China knows that autonomy is not in its best interest. China knows that autonomy only creates instability and therefore cannot be allowed. China cannot allow the existence of a separate national identity within its national territory. The solution to the Tibet issue is not autonomy but the traditional Chinese solution of repression of Tibetan national identity and economic development accompanied by colonization.

China has clearly indicated that it will not dialogue with the Dalai Lama about Tibetan autonomy. The March 2008 uprising produced international pressure on China to dialogue, which it pretended to do in May and July. This was sufficient to defuse threats of some international leaders to boycott the Olympic opening ceremony. Since then, after another meeting with the Dalai Lama’s representatives in November, Chinese officials have scornfully rejected any dialogue about Tibetan autonomy and chastised the Tibetans for bringing up the same issues that had been rejected since the early 1980s. China clearly imagines that it won the propaganda battle about Tibet that began in March and it has since begun an unprecedented diplomatic offensive.

This offensive is based upon the belief that Western countries do not really care about Tibet and are only exploiting a non-existent issue in order to denigrate China and prevent its rise to its rightful status as a great world power. Since Western countries do not really care about Tibet, and anyhow they do not really know the “truth” about Tibet, these countries will not jeopardize their diplomatic and economic relations with China for the sake of Tibet. Tibet has always been an issue of extreme sensitivity for China, perhaps even more sensitive than Taiwan because it involves the question of Chinese rule over a non-Chinese people. However, the uprising of 2008 and the protests against the Olympic torch relay aroused a strongly nationalistic reaction among the Chinese government and people. In the past, China has often imagined that the Tibet issue was resolved and has reacted with surprise when Tibetans reveal that they are still not reconciled to Chinese rule and that they still revere the Dalai Lama. They were surprised again in 2008. The difference this time is that China feels it has the economic and political clout to mount an offensive of its own to coerce international acceptance of its position on Tibet.

China has always reacted strongly to the Dalai Lama’s international travels and world leaders’ meetings with him. However, it has typically made angry statements about “hurting the feelings of the Chinese people” but has not allowed any such incidents to damage its relations with other countries. This situation began to change in 2007 when several important countries’ leaders, including those of Austria, Germany, Australia, Canada and the United States met with him officially for the first time. In the United States he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and in Canada he was made an honorary citizen. China singled out Germany for economic pressure and demanded that Germany apologize in order to restore good relations.

France was the next subject of China’s ire after French President Sarkozy threatened to boycott the Olympic opening and Paris was the site of one of the worst protests against the Olympic torch. Sarkozy declined to meet with the Dalai Lama in August when the Dalai Lama was in France, but he did so in November at a meeting of Nobel Prize winners in Poland. Sarkozy perhaps thought a meeting in another country on the sidelines of a meeting with a different purpose might not be too offensive to the Chinese. However, China reacted in an unprecedented manner, canceling an already scheduled and important economic summit with European leaders.

China’s cancellation of the European meeting may in the future be seen to have been the first move in its new offensive on Tibet. Tibetans and their Western supporters thought that the 2008 uprising put them on the offensive. But China’s belief

that it won the subsequent propaganda battle and that its successful Olympics marked its emergence onto the world stage as a new economic and political power apparently convinced the Chinese leaders that they could take a more aggressive position on Tibet. China now seems to be willing to demand that other countries adhere to its position on Tibet at the risk of damaging their good relations with China. The financial crisis in the United States and other capitalist countries has also seemed to give China the impression that its own economic and political system is superior and that it can be more demanding in its international relations. The manifestation of this new attitude has been new demands that its critics cease their complaints about Tibet.

Recent articles in the Chinese press have suggested that not only must other countries not criticize China about Tibet but they must revise their beliefs about the issue. This is very typical of the Chinese political and cultural mentality. It reflects a type of thought control that is a characteristic of Chinese political history and a specialty of Communist regimes. China now feels that it is in a position to demand international conformity to its version of the reality of Tibet, much like the ideological conformity the CCP demands of the Chinese people. The precedent for this new strategy is China's coercion of almost all countries in the world to adhere to its "One China" policy in regard to Taiwan. China often interprets the "One China" policy to apply to Tibet and demands statements from other countries of recognition that Tibet is an inseparable part of China. China's recent propaganda indicates that it will similarly require conformity to its view on Tibet as a price for good relations and it will use its political and economic power to enforce this demand.

A 5 March China Daily article was explicit about China's strategy to coerce conformity in regard to Tibet:

Some Westerners long harboring ill intentions toward China have taken advantage of the Tibet issue in an attempt to force their misconceptions upon China. It is known that the Tibet issue is in essence not an issue of ethnicity, religion or human rights, but one of several Western infringements on China's sovereignty, territorial integrity and core national interests. Western nations should recognize that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and stop interfering if they want to remain on good terms with China. . . .

Relations between China and the rest of the world have experienced a historic transition. China's development is now tied to the world's, while the rest of the world also needs greater cooperation with China. It is impossible for any Western country to not interact with China. However, it is impossible for the West to cooperate with China unless it develops an objective and unbiased stance on Tibet.

Another China Daily article on 12 March called on China to develop its own diplomatic doctrine. The "China Doctrine" would make clear to the world that China claims the right to have its own say in the international community. The world should be made clear about what are China's core interests and bottom lines. The article said that the world did not yet understand that Tibet was one of China's core interests. It quoted Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi's statement that China would make it a core interest that other countries not interfere in China's internal affairs by entertaining the Dalai Lama. At a news conference summarizing diplomatic achievements in the past year, Yang's countenance was said to have "suddenly stiffened" when he urged the international community "to not allow the Dalai Lama to visit their countries" and "to not allow him to use their territories to separate Tibet from China." Refusing visitations by the Dalai Lama should become one of the "basic norms of international relations" of any country cultivating ties with China, Yang said, "clenching his hand into a fist." Clearly, China Daily said, the foreign minister was "erecting a post" to delineate its bottom line on Tibet, as a part of its diplomatic doctrine.

China was successful in its campaign to coerce conformity to the "One China" policy, often from countries for which this policy had little or no meaning. Now, it clearly imagines that this is also the solution to the Tibet issue, an issue the existence of which it denies except as invented and exploited by "hostile Western forces." China believes that its international critics have no real interest in Tibet and will abandon the issue if the alternative is bad relations with China. The tone of the new White Paper on Democratic Reforms and much of recent Chinese propaganda reveals a confidence that China now has sufficient economic and political power to coerce international conformity to its position on Tibet. China perhaps expects that it will not be too many years before it will have representatives of Western countries at its annual celebrations of "Serf Emancipation Day."

China has gone on the offensive about Tibet. Western countries previously supportive of Tibet may be vulnerable to China's coercion. Much will depend upon the

future “correlation of forces,” as the Soviets used to say, especially on the economic front. China has resisted the offensive mounted by Tibetans and their supporters to convince it to dialogue with the Dalai Lama. China has countered with its own offensive, and supporters of Tibet may have to go on the defensive to oppose China’s coercive strategy. China has said clearly and bluntly that it will not dialogue with the Dalai Lama about Tibetan autonomy. It has openly revealed its new strategy on Tibet. Tibet’s supporters, including those in the United States, may have to contemplate a shift in their own strategy from the futile attempt to put pressure on China to dialogue to a defense against China’s new diplomatic offensive.

10 March 2009

Any opinions expressed in this statement are those of the author and not of Radio Free Asia.

