The Freeman Report provides an open forum for individual opinions and commentaries on current events in China. All opinions expressed in the feature essay of the report are those of the author.

FEATURE ESSAY
Tibetan Protests: Prospects for Resolution

BY STEVEN MARSHALL

This essay is based on Steven Marshall’s testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 23, 2008 at a hearing on “The Crisis in Tibet: Finding a Path to Peace” (view the full statement on line at www.cecc.gov).

A cascade of Tibetan protests began in Lhasa on March 10, 2008, then, by the end of March, swept across much of the ethnic Tibetan area of China. Except for periods of armed conflict between Tibetan and Chinese armed forces and periods of politically-driven social chaos, no Chinese government has been confronted by an upsurge of Tibetan discontent as widely dispersed, sustained, and popular since the Chinese Communist Party established the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

As of late April, the situation in Tibetan protest areas is as grim as it is fluid, and will negatively impact tens of thousands of Tibetans. Chinese security forces, principally People’s Armed Police (PAP), and government authorities are sealing off protest areas, cutting communications networks and confiscating communications equipment (including mobile phones). As a result, the flow of information from protest areas has declined. Unconfirmed reports tell of severe abuse and maltreatment to detainees – beating, inadequate food and water, and severe overcrowding. Very little information is available about the legal process facing thousands of detained Tibetans. Authorities reportedly have transferred substantial numbers of detainees away from their areas of residence, often to locations unknown to their families – in spite of notification requirements under China’s Criminal Procedure Law.

In The News
TOKYO  Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met with his Japanese counterpart Masahiko Komura and other officials in preparation for President Hu Jintao’s state visit to Japan in May. The first visit to Japan by a Chinese president in a decade, President Hu’s upcoming trip is seen as a major point in the bilateral effort toward building a “mutually beneficial strategic relationship.” Both sides seek to expand cooperation on international issues including North Korea and climate change. Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda’s visit to Beijing last December signaled a new warmth in China-Japan relations. However, sustained progress may depend on easing tensions over new strains such as food safety, Tibet, and stalled territorial talks.

BEIJING  In consideration of the U.S. subprime crisis which brings down the valuation of U.S. enterprises, as well as the appreciation of Chinese currency against the U.S. dollar, the Chinese government has decided to encourage overseas mergers and acquisitions (M&A). China’s overseas M&A is expected to take an aggressive turn. Statistics indicate that China’s cross-country M&A deals grew rapidly during the first quarter of 2008. In particular, China is interested in investing in resource assets. However, China’s financial institutions remain careful in overseas M&A deals.
Aggressive reimplementation of political indoctrination campaigns is following swiftly in the wake of crushed protests. Reports are emerging of anger at the new campaigns by monks who refuse to comply with demands to condemn the Dalai Lama. Authorities compel ordinary Tibetans to assemble publicly, denounce the Dalai Lama, and state that he was behind the protest and riot activity. A second wave of detentions is taking shape.

Two key factors distinguish the current protests from the March 1959 Lhasa uprising and the March 1989 protests and rioting that led to martial law in Lhasa. First, the 2008 protests have spread far beyond Lhasa and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and into Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAPs) in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces. Second, the protestors have continued to persevere even as Chinese security forces established and tightened lockdowns.

The total number of officially acknowledged detentions is rising steeply – but the official figures reflect only the fraction of protests and resultant detentions that Chinese officials wish for observers to see. The actual numbers are far higher. In more than 40 of the counties where peaceful protests reportedly took place, officials have released no information about the actions of security forces against Tibetan protestors.

The Chinese leadership chose to blame the Dalai Lama for the protests and for the resulting pre-Olympics news reporting critical of China. At the same time, they chose not to acknowledge Tibetan dissatisfaction with policies that have not delivered the rights and freedoms nominally protected under China’s Constitution and legal system. Are there Tibetans in exile who set out to encourage protest activity in the run-up to the Olympics? Yes. But Chinese officials have provided no evidence that links the Dalai Lama directly to such objectives and activities.

Chinese officials also blame the Dalai Lama for Tibetan violence during rioting in Lhasa and in other locations. They do so by seeking to hold him accountable for the views of individuals and groups in what Chinese authorities call “the Dalai clique.” Are there Tibetans in exile who acknowledge interest in a violent struggle for Tibetan independence, and who have encouraged destructive action in China during the pre-Olympic period? Yes. But the Dalai Lama’s actions and public statements, and his consistently pacifist counsel to Tibetans – wherever they live – place him at odds with violent intentions and actions.

China’s policies toward Tibetans have been the root cause of the protests and riots. There is no credible evidence to support Chinese government claims that the Dalai Lama (or “the Dalai clique”) manipulated Tibetans into protesting and rioting. Communist Party power over China’s legislative and regulatory process allows the government virtually unlimited ability to impose unpopular programs among Tibetans.

The function and legitimacy of Tibetan Buddhism has been especially hard hit since 2005. Legal measures closely regulating monastic life in the TAR took effect in January 2007. Nationwide measures establishing state supervision of the centuries-old Tibetan tradition of identifying, seating, and educating boys whom Tibetans believe are reincarnations of Buddhist teachers took effect last September.

The Qinghai-Tibet railway, a premier project of Great Western Development program, entered service in July 2006. The railway’s impact could overwhelm Tibetans and sharply increase pressure on the Tibetan culture. Another state-run program to settle Tibetan nomads into compact communities is nearing completion throughout Tibetan areas, disrupting an important sector of the Tibetan culture and economy. Nomads have participated in the recent protests in substantial numbers, placing some counties on the protest map for the first time since 1987.

Tibetan protestors, in their widespread calls for Tibetan independence, have provided an unprecedented referendum on China’s autonomy system. Weak implementation of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law is a principal factor preventing Tibetans from protecting their culture, language, and religion. The Chinese leadership’s refusal to recognize the role of Chinese policy in driving Tibetan discontent, and their insistence on blaming the Dalai Lama, puts the leadership in an increasingly risky position.

The Party has signaled that it may wait for the Dalai Lama to pass away, calculating perhaps that when the Dalai Lama’s life comes to end, so will the issues that China associates with him. Tibetans will not accept a Chinese-appointed replacement of the 14th Dalai Lama nor is there any reason to suppose that they will come to terms with Chinese policies. To assert otherwise, as the Chinese do, is a gross miscalculation that could place local and regional security at heightened risk for decades to come.

The recent protests may already have sewn the seeds for what someday could become the next generation of Tibetan protest. If Chinese and Tibetans – along with their friends, neighbors and partners – see in the current wave of Tibetan protests a daunting challenge, then each side should contemplate the potential outcome during a future scenario in which the 14th Dalai Lama may no longer be available to urge Tibetans to back away from violence.

(cont pg 3)
There can be no prospect for a durable resolution to the current crisis unless the Chinese government implements an ethnic autonomy system that respects the right of ethnic minorities to manage their own affairs, and engages the Dalai Lama in that process. Will a future Chinese president be able to explain persuasively to China’s citizens why the leadership failed to meet with the Dalai Lama when they had the opportunity? The current Chinese leadership would do well to ask the following question of themselves: will a future Chinese president believe that a persuasive explanation even exists?

**Editor’s Note:** On April 25, the Chinese government announced that it would meet with a representative of the Dalai Lama “in the coming days.” The offer was considered to be the most significant concession from Beijing since the protests last month. However, the Dalai Lama’s spokesperson said he had not received any official notification of the meeting from Beijing.

**Steven Marshall is Senior Advisor and Prisoner Database Program Director for the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. The Commission monitors human rights, including worker rights and the development of the rule of law in China, and maintains a Political Prisoner Database (available to the public via www.cecc.gov). Mr. Marshall’s experience on the Tibetan plateau dates to the mid-1980s. He has visited many of the towns and monasteries where the recent protests occurred and witnessed at close range the events of March 1989 that led to martial law in Lhasa.**

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**Publications**

By [Charles Freeman](#), Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

The article discusses Europe’s changing attitudes toward trade with China. The author suggests that the dramatic shift in Europe’s favorable perceptions of China since the beginning of 2008 has made European trade policies toward China increasingly resemble those of the United States.

[Click here for a PDF version of the report.]

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**Conferences & Events**

**May 6**  
*Superclass and Futurecast: A Conversation on Globalization*

CSIS is pleased to host [David Rothkopf](#), President and CEO of Garten Rothkopf and Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and [Robert Shapiro](#), Chairman of Sonecon LLC and former Undersecretary of Commerce, for a discussion on globalization. These international economic experts will address questions and discuss their new books, respectively entitled, "Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making," and "Futurecast: How Superpowers, Populations, and Globalization Will Change the Way You Live and Work." [Charles Freeman](#), Freeman Chair in China Studies at CSIS, will chair the session.

**March 27**  
*Taiwan’s Election and What They Mean*

The Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (CNAPS) at Brookings, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Georgetown University hosted a seminar to examine the voting results of Taiwan’s election, Taiwan’s current politics and its continued political and democratic development, and the implications of the election and referendums for relations among Taiwan, the United States, and China. The event featured leading experts from Taiwan, the United States and China including representatives from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Kuomintang (KMT).

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**TRIVIA ANSWER**

**China has over 37 million vehicles.** The number of vehicles rose sevenfold between 1990 and 2006, and is expected to reach 300 million by 2030. China has now surpassed Germany and Japan as the second-largest car market in the world, and is expected to overtake the United States by around 2015.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FREEMAN CHAIR 2007/2008*

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2008

February

By Melissa Murphy (Contributing Author), Research Associate, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

By Xiaoqing Lu, Research Associate, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS, and Bates Gill, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

January

By Charles Freeman, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

By Charles Freeman, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

By Melissa Murphy, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

2007

November

By Charles Freeman, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

"China’s Civil Society Organizations: What Future in the Health Sector?," CSIS, November 2007
By Bates Gill, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, J. Stephen Morrison, Director, Africa Program, CSIS, and Xiaoqing Lu, Research Associate, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

The China Report 2008
Melissa Murphy (contribution author), Exclusive Analysis Limited, London: 2007

October

By Xiaoqing Lu, Research Associate, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS, and Bates Gill, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

September

By Bates Gill, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS, Chin-Hao Huang, Research Assistant, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS, and J. Stephen Morrison, Director of the Africa Program, CSIS

August

"The Mist Lifts over China’s Sky-high Railway," Asia Times, August 29, 2007
By Eve Cary, Research Assistant, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

July

By Bates Gill, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS, Yanzhong Huang, Director of the Center for Global Health Studies, and Xiaoqing Lu, Research Associate, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

By Robert Sutter, Visiting Professor of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and Chin-Hao Huang, Research Assistant, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS
FREEMAN FACTS:

Intellectual Property Rights in China

1. Official Chinese figures revealed that 4,322 people were convicted of product piracy in 2007.
2. In 2007, Chinese authorities seized a total of about 76 million pirated products and shut down 13,170 piracy-oriented business entities.
3. Pirated goods cost EU business USD33.3 billion in lost trade annually, amounting to 1/3 of current EU exports to China.
4. 93% of DVDs sold in China are unlicensed and 82% of software is pirated.

Sources: Associated Press, Business Software Alliance, State Intellectual Property Office, Xinhua

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