Ben Hillman

is Senior Lecturer at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU where he specializes in Chinese politics, ethnic politics and political change in Asia.

Unrest in Tibet: Understanding the post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict

In this seminar Ben Hillman reviews the dominant political and scholarly interpretations of the current wave of unrest in Tibet. Drawing on preliminary findings from an ARC-funded research project, he suggests that current explanations of the unrest fail to account for significant diversity in the views, interests and concerns of ordinary Tibetans. Ben argues that a greater understanding of the diversity of Tibetan’s viewpoints and of the varied impact of Chinese government policies across the region is needed in order to strengthen the quality of political and scholarly debate about China’s Tibet policies.
Unrest in Tibet: Understanding the post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict

5 March 2014, 4:00pm - 5:30pm (Wednesday)
Seminar Room (ground floor)
Australian Centre on China in the World, Building 188, Fellows Lane, ANU

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Unrest in Tibet: Understanding the post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict

Since riots engulfed Lhasa in the spring of 2008 the Tibetan Plateau has been a hotbed of ethnic unrest. Many hundreds of people have died as victims of ethnic-based violence or as victims of crackdowns by state security forces. Ethnic protest in the region is also taking on new forms. Since 2011 more than 120 Tibetans have set themselves on fire in extreme acts of protest. The current wave of unrest in China’s Tibetan areas has been described as the most serious since the 1950s, and one of the toughest policy challenges facing the new Communist Party leadership. In this seminar Ben Hillman reviews the dominant political and scholarly interpretations of the current wave of unrest in Tibet. Drawing on preliminary findings from an ARC-funded research project, he suggests that current explanations of the unrest fail to account for significant diversity in the views, interests and concerns of ordinary Tibetans. Ben argues that a greater understanding of the diversity of Tibetan’s viewpoints and of the varied impact of Chinese government policies across the region is needed in order to strengthen the quality of political and scholarly debate about China’s Tibet policies.

Ben Hillman is Senior Lecturer in comparative politics and public policy at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University. He specializes in Chinese politics, ethnic politics and political change in Asia. His book on informal institutions in Chinese politics will be available from Stanford University Press in April 2014. Ben is currently editing a book on ethnic conflict in western China that will be published by Columbia University Press later this year. In 2005 he founded the Eastern Tibet Training Institute (ETTI), which provides free vocational training to unemployed ethnic minority youth in western China: www.etti.org.cn & www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2011/s3327036.htm. By a strange twist of fate, Ben is now based in Jakarta where he represents the ANU on the Australian-government funded Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI).