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A Deliberative Approach to the Tibet Autonomy Issue

Promoting Mutual Trust through Dialogue

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews and compares three deliberative approaches to conflict, and applies the deliberative approach to the Tibet issue. It examines the case of a deliberative workshop, its achievements and limits. Deliberative dialogue appears to have improved knowledge and mutual understanding, enhanced mutual trust and deliberative capacities, and produced moderating effects.

KEYWORDS: deliberative democracy, deliberative approach, dialogue, conflict resolution, Tibet issue

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE of deliberative democracy was first developed in Western societies in the political science disciplines in the 1990s.[1] In the past decade, it spread to Asia and even to China.[2] Deliberative democracy prioritizes reasoned argument and discussion in which "interests" are recognized but do not dominate. The cogency and force of argument should prevail over political power. Communications work to ensure that arguments and statements are factually true, normatively right, and expressively sincere.[3]

1. See Joshua Cohen, "Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Legitimacy," in *The Good Polity*, eds. Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 17–34; John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jon Elster, ed., *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

2. Ethan Leib and Baogang He, eds., *The Search for Deliberative Democracy in China* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

3. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

Deliberation examines the merit of an argument and evidence at a reflective and rational level, leading to changes in opinion and policy attitude. Deliberation requires that reason and truth predominate, and emotion, bias, and social prejudice must give way to reason and substantive argument. The deliberative capacity can be measured by the existence and development of diverse views, the willingness to change one's view, and the respect for reason and the production of the best argument.

Deliberative democratic theorists also stress the capacity, right, and opportunity of ordinary citizens to participate in public deliberation. The developed and varied forums of public deliberation include citizen juries, focus groups, consensus conferences, deliberative polling, and town meetings.[4]

The deliberative approach to national identity conflicts has been introduced and examined by O'Flynn, Dryzek, Fishkin, and others, as will be discussed later. It has been seen as an effective means of enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and building friendship between and across ethnic groups.[5] Scholars differ, however, in their evaluation of the effects of deliberation. Cass Sunstein, for example, argues that deliberation will lead to polarization.[6] Others doubt the value of deliberative democracy in conflict situations, and some even claim that deliberation can contain a bias against minorities and women, although there is actually little evidence of this.[7]

Although the deliberative approach is currently favored in conflict resolution studies, it is completely foreign to many scholars and no doubt will be regarded by some with intense suspicion. Nevertheless, the deliberative approach has been applied to the national identity conflict issue in China in recent years.[8] The application is innovative in that it attempts to change the Chinese political culture by developing the deliberative forum in a civil society context.[9]

4. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (London: Verso, 2003).

5. James Fishkin, *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ch. 6.

6. See Cass R. Sunstein, "Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes," *Yale Law Journal* 110:1 (October 2000), pp. 71–119; and idem, "The Law of Group Polarization," in *Debating Deliberative Democracy*, eds. James S. Fishkin and Peter Laslett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

7. David Miller, "Is Deliberative Democracy Unfair to Disadvantaged Groups?" in Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, ed., *Democracy as Public Deliberation* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), pp. 201–25.

8. See Baogang He, *Deliberative Democracy: Theory, Method, and Practice* (Beijing: China's Social Science Publishers, 2008), ch. 4, on the deliberative democracy and national identity question.

9. Baogang He, "Transnational Civil Society and the National Identity Question in East Asia," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 10:2 (May 2004), pp. 227–46; Leib and He, *The Search for Deliberative Democracy,* chs. 1, 4, 6.

In collaboration with Alex Butler and Simon Bradshaw, Baogang He organized a three day deliberative workshop in late November 2008 in Melbourne, Australia. This was a pilot deliberative forum on the Tibetan autonomy question, Sino-Tibet relations, and the disputed history of Tibet. The academic aims of the workshop were to test whether deliberation promotes mutual understanding, leads to value change, polarizes the participants, or produces moderating effects. Its practical purposes were to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance between ethnic-Chinese and Tibetan groups, and to enhance the deliberative capacities of both ethnic-Chinese and Tibetan students.

The deliberative workshop had mixed results. The recruitment of participants was difficult and therefore disappointing, and the value question remains unchanged. The small sample size in this study means that the results are best considered as indicative and may therefore act as pointers for further confirmatory work. Nevertheless, the experiment validated two claims. First, a *citizen-initiated* deliberative forum moves away from, and is more effective than, those of state institutions in terms of creating a public space, challenging narrow official lines of thinking, and moderately changing people's opinions. Second, a deliberative forum is able to reduce the level of mutual distrust and build up mutual understanding and trust despite its inherent limits.

This paper examines the achievement and limits of this innovative deliberation. The structure of the paper is as follows. It first introduces and reviews the various deliberative approaches to conflict. Then it examines the reasons and background for applying the deliberative approach to the Tibet issue, followed by a discussion of the design of a deliberative forum on the Tibet autonomy question. The results of the deliberative forum are examined in detail in the last two sections.

DELIBERATIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICTS

The deliberative approach can be seen as a form of Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR). ICR involves problem-solving discussions between unofficial representatives of groups or states engaged in protracted violent conflict. The objective is to re-humanize the enemy, foster positive attitudes, and create agreement on the source and nature of the conflict.[10] Fisher explains that

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10. Ronald J. Fisher, "Interactive Conflict Resolution," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), p. 227.

"the rationale is to provide an informal, low risk, noncommittal, and neutral forum in which unofficial representatives of the parties may engage in exploratory analysis and creative problem solving, free from the usual constraints of official policy and public scrutiny."[11]

ICR might include highly influential representatives from the conflicting groups, ordinary members, and also representatives of the diaspora communities.[12] In some cases, the aim of ICR is primarily educational: to provide insights and change perceptions. But in other cases, the aim is to transfer the solutions suggested in the informal interactions to official decision-making bodies via the influential participants. ICR workshops can also indirectly contribute to an official solution by "legitimizing problem-solving interactions between adversaries and the accumulation of public opinion supporting negotiation."[13] Furthermore, "grassroots reconciliatory dialogue across adversarial lines can . . . help counteract the influence of pressure groups working to block conciliatory policies."[14]

The deliberative approach can be further broken down into the following three models: two normative principles, discourse in the public sphere, and the designed forums, detailed below. These are simply the models that can be derived from the available literature and should by no means be treated as exhaustive.

Two Normative Principles

Following John Stuart Mill, Ian O'Flynn is adamant that a stable democracy cannot exist without a sense of common identity. He builds his argument around two key norms of deliberative democracy: reciprocity and publicity. The requirement of reciprocity states that, in seeking to justify proposals, citizens must appeal to reasons that *all* parties to the discussion can appreciate, not to reasons reducible to the interests of one ethnic group. By publicity, O'Flynn means that the process by which representatives arrive at decisions should be open and transparent. He claims that a proper respect for these norms can help the citizens of divided societies develop and sustain a stronger sense of common identity, without discarding their ethnic affiliations.[15]

11. Ibid., pp. 229–30.
12. Ibid., p. 242.
13. Ibid., p. 261.
14. Ibid., p. 243.
15. Ian O'Flynn, *Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

O'Flynn also stresses the importance of fostering a strong civil society in which individuals can engage each other in non-ethnic terms, and which allows space for the emergence of identities that cut across ethnic lines. It is essential to allow alternative forms of political engagement and expression, or reasoned political argument. A common objection to the deliberative model of democracy is that those without a sophisticated political vocabulary are at an inherent disadvantage. They are unlikely to prevail over their more articulate counterparts, no matter the strength of their case. This deficiency can be partly addressed, says O'Flynn, by allowing narratives and personal stories to be included in deliberations.[16]

Discourse in the Public Sphere

The public sphere, the conditionality of sovereignty, and the transnationalization of political discourse feature prominently in John S. Dryzek's version of deliberative democracy in divided societies.[17] Dryzek argues that contending discourses (sets of concepts, categories, and ideas that provide ways of understanding the world) underlie many of the world's conflicts. These discourses can, however, open the way to greater dialogue across state boundaries and between opposing factions in societies divided by ethnicity, nationality, or religion. The argument is that engagement among discourses that is not geared toward building sovereign authority or making political decisions can help to resolve many of the most intractable conflicts.

Dryzek's aim is to determine how deliberative procedures can yield results on contentious issues where the fundamental values and beliefs that participants bring to the table are diametrically opposed or contradictory. Dryzek offers a number of recommendations for deliberative democracy in divided societies.

Firstly, deliberation should be focused not on values or ideals but on specific *needs*—such as the need for education or for adequate sustenance. Since such needs can be appreciated by all parties to the deliberation, focusing the discussion on them will make divisions seem less intractable. Secondly, there should be periods of "small talk" that are not geared toward resolving any

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16. A lot of work on this issue has been done by feminist theorists who argue that the exclusion of "anecdotal" argument from academic discourse has been a way of excluding women's experience. See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

17. John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), pp. 154–57.

issues at all. Dryzek makes this recommendation on the basis of research showing that periods of "irrelevant discussion" can help to foster subsequent cooperative behavior.

Third, Dryzek argues that deliberation should not necessarily occur primarily within the existing institutions of the nation state, and should not be directly connected to political decisions, especially not those regarding sovereign authority. Dryzek maintains that people involved in deliberative procedures are unlikely to change their minds or to admit that they have changed their minds, where the deliberation is intended to produce a political decision—particularly one that has some bearing on who controls the state and its resources. The "deadly contest for sovereignty" inhibits people from opposing factions from making concessions. Furthermore, individuals are typically reluctant to admit that they have changed their minds "under the gaze of both opponents and those with a shared identity." Personal pride and credibility play an important role here.

For these reasons, Dryzek recommends that deliberations should occur within an "informal communicative realm" that takes place over time, such as a public network, deliberative poll, or policy dialogue. This would afford participants the opportunity to admit having been persuaded by the other side. If the deliberations are not directly linked to political decisions, the contest for power is less likely to prevent people from openly changing their minds.

Designed Forums

James Fishkin and his colleagues have developed an experimental study on the effectiveness of grassroots deliberation in managing and de-escalating identity conflicts. In 2007, Fishkin organized a "deliberative poll" in Omagh, Northern Ireland. One hundred and twenty-seven Protestants and Catholics were asked to answer a series of questions relating to children's education policy in the region. After the poll, the participants were invited to deliberate in small-group discussions and plenary sessions. The original questionnaire was then put before the participants once more. The results indicated that the perceptions of the participants changed significantly in the course of the dialogue. The proportion of Catholics who believed Protestants were "open to reason" increased from 36% to 52%, while the proportion of Protestants believing that Catholics were "open to reason" increased from 40% to 56%. There was also a dramatic increase in the proportion of each community that

viewed the other as "trustworthy." For Catholics, the proportion rose from 50% to 62%, and for Protestants it rose from 50% to 60%. The experiment suggests that citizens are open to rational discussion and willing to change their opinions, and that deliberation can enhance mutual trust in divided societies.[18]

Comparing Three Approaches

O'Flynn's model is characterized by its emphasis on principles of reciprocity and publicity. For O'Flynn, deliberations should take place between elite representatives as well as ordinary citizens. The aims of deliberation should engage major political issues, create an overarching civic identity, and resolve seemingly intractable political problems. Dryzek, by contrast, situates deliberation entirely in the public sphere, and insists that deliberation should be "semi-detached" from the state, focusing on specific needs, not issues of sovereignty and constitutional essentials. The aim is to create shared discourses in divided societies. The designed forums developed by Fishkin similarly sees deliberation taking place at the grassroots level, but in a controlled setting where all the relevant information for decision-making is provided and there is input from experts and facilitators. One would think that to have any noticeable impact, such experiments would need to be replicated on a large scale.

The three models offer different accounts of how deliberation is supposed to confer legitimacy upon the solutions. For O'Flynn, legitimacy is achieved by the satisfaction of reciprocity and publicity. These principles ensure that the solutions reached take account of the interests of all involved and treat persons as equals. According to Dryzek, a resolution is legitimate if it can be justified in terms of a shared discourse that has arisen through public-sphere deliberation, including a plurality of voices. Meanwhile, for Fishkin, a resolution is legitimate if it is reached by participants who have been given all of the relevant information and the opportunity to deliberate.

The three approaches aim at different but related outcomes. O'Flynn's model aims to treat all participants as equals and does not marginalize extremist elements. As a result, the outcome is more likely to be accepted by all involved, and the prospect of a backlash from extremist groups is minimized. For Dryzek, informal deliberation in the public sphere is supposed to

18. Fishkin, *When the People Speak.*

create a new discourse. In the long term, this new discourse infiltrates the political sphere and influences official decision-making. For Fishkin, the aim of deliberation is to build tolerance and trust by breaking down stereotypes and negative attitudes, and to re-humanize the Other.

The three models differ in their methods of enhancing the deliberative capacities of citizens. Fishkin's approach seems to be strongest in this regard, insofar as participants in his experimental deliberative polls are provided with all of the relevant information and there is input from experts and facilitators. O'Flynn, by contrast, does not provide mechanisms for enhancing the deliberative capacities of citizens. Those citizens with limited deliberative capacities are simply encouraged to rely on narratives rather than on reasoned argument. Having said this, O'Flynn's publicity principle does ensure that citizens are given an insight into the reasoning employed by representatives in their decision-making. In a similar vein, Dryzek focuses on specific needs rather than issues of sovereignty and constitutional essentials; this arguably makes the deliberative process more accessible to ordinary citizens.

Regarding the degree of interaction required, O'Flynn stresses that within civil society, high levels of interaction are needed to create overarching civic identity. The interaction between civil society and the state is ensured via the principle of publicity. By contrast, Dryzek emphasizes extensive interaction within civil society but only a "loose" connection between the state and the public sphere, where the former is "semi-detached" from the latter. Fishkin limits deliberation to isolated experiments involving a relatively small sample of participants.

The empirical testability of the three approaches varies. It is difficult to see how O'Flynn's proposal might be tested for effectiveness. And in relation to Dryzek's model, determining whether a public discourse has changed the public consciousness and infiltrated the political realm is no easy feat. Only Fishkin's approach seems to be empirically testable: the impact of deliberation is rigidly tested through pre- and post-deliberation polling, and the results are quantifiable.

The effectiveness of the three deliberative models is subject to interpretation. According to Dryzek, the Canadian experience demonstrates that when deliberation is focused on sovereignty and the Constitution, the likely outcome is "deadlock, frustration, and failure."[19] But public-sphere informal

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19. Dryzek, "Deliberative Democracy in Divided Societies: Alternatives to Agonism and Analgesia," *Political Theory* 33:2 (April 2005), p. 235.

deliberation has helped make Canada "such a generally successful society."[20] Alain Noel, however, points out that the "deepening of democracy" in Canada—the greater inclusion of the masses in the political process—has led to an impasse. Ajzenstat and Cook further argue that public participation has worsened the divisions in Canadian society.[21]

Take another example: Northern Ireland. Dryzek lists the case of Northern Ireland in the 1990s among his "three kinds of failure."[22] He says that the relationship between the public and political sphere is too "tight." Those involved in the public deliberation had close links to the political leadership on both sides. Deliberation thus tended to degenerate into a "contest over sovereign authority." By contrast, Sean Byrne seems to think that the public deliberation in Northern Ireland has been quite successful. The interactions among local historical societies and churches/clergymen have created forums for joint problem solving in and between local neighborhoods.[23]

WHY PROPOSE A DELIBERATIVE APPROACH FOR THE TIBET ISSUE?

Push the Questions Farther

The deliberative workshop on the Tibet issue built upon and extended the above studies to explore whether deliberation can deal with the problem of Tibetan autonomy. The workshop put Dryzek's proposal into practice. The participants were asked to critically reflect on the two competing official discourses on the Tibet issue, that of the Chinese government and that of the Tibetan government-in-exile (TGIE). Alternative views and approaches were to be explored. The workshop attempted to democratize the state's discourses on the Tibet issue and to create a considered public sphere in which ethnic Chinese and Tibetans could engage in rational discussion.

O'Flynn's two principles of publicity and reciprocity are purely theoretical and need to be put into practice. The workshop was intended to involve real people in the real world, allowing them to engage in real dialogue. Fishkin's experimental study was limited in that it dealt with easy issues like education

20. Ibid., pp. 235–36.
21. Janet Ajzenstat and Curtis Cook, "Constitution Making and the Myth of the People," in *Constitutional Predicament: Canada after the Referendum of 1992,* ed. Curtis Cook (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 112–26.
22. Dryzek, "Deliberative Democracy in Divided Societies," p. 237.
23. Sean Byrne, "Consociational and Civic Society Approaches to Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Peace Research* 38:3 (May 2001), p. 339.

policy. One could argue that when it comes to the most difficult issues like autonomy, deliberation alone cannot solve the problem. Our deliberative workshop put this argument to the test. We focused on a number of tough political questions regarding the issue of Tibetan autonomy and examined whether deliberation enhances mutual understanding and trust. Would the participants change their value position in the course of deliberative process? Would reason prevail, and if so, how?

Search for an Alternative to Overcome the Current Stalemate

The Tibet issue has remained intractable for at least 50 years.[24] Several dialogues between representatives of the exiled Dalai Lama and the Chinese government in the past few years have produced no tangible results.[25] The 2008 Tibetan protests against Chinese rule in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics,[26] and the counter-protests by Chinese students in major cities around the world, inflamed mistrust and suspicion between the Tibetan and ethnic Chinese communities. This discord tarnished China's credibility as a global power.[27] Over the next few years, increased radicalization in both Tibetan and ethnic Chinese communities is anticipated. This highlights the need for initiatives that would build up mutual understanding and trust at a grassroots level, as well as within the leaderships. Given how hard it is now to rebuild trust between the Chinese government and the TGIE, it is vital to promote mutual understanding and trust between the two communities of people through citizens' deliberation.

Policy-oriented studies on Tibet have been informed by two mainstream paradigms: realism and human rights discourse.[28] The politics of Tibet has

24. Elliot Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics* (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2004); Barry Sautman and June Dreyer, eds., *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region* (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2006).

25. D. S. Rajan, "Beijing and the Dalai Lama: Ice Melting?" South Asia Analysis Group, New Delhi, no. 1271 (February 28, 2005); "Talks Progressing, Says Tibet's PM-in-Exile," *The Nation* [Bangkok], March 14, 2005; Tashi Rabgey and Tseten Wangchuk Sharlho, "Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects," *Policy Studies* 12 (Washington, D.C.: East West Center, 2004).

26. For a historical explanation of the Tibetan protests, see Tsering Shakya, "Tibetan Questions," *New Left Review* 51 (May-June 2008), p. 5.

27. Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, "China's Olympic Nightmare: What the Games Mean for Beijing's Future," *Foreign Affairs* 87:4 (July-August 2008), p. 47.

28. Of course, scholars employ other theoretical approaches found in feminism, sociology, and cultural studies. For example, Lauran R. Hartley, "On the Margins of Tibet: Cultural Survival on

been analyzed through an examination of the political relations among major powers.[29] The Dalai Lama's policies and strategies have been adapted to shifting international power relations,[30] while Beijing's Tibet policy is certainly based on its constant assessment of and adjustment to great-power relations.[31] Despite the recommendation by many that its officials should talk to the Dalai Lama directly,[32] Beijing has adopted an ever tougher policy. Its intention appears to be isolating and silencing the Dalai Lama completely: time is on Beijing's side as China rises and the Dalai Lama ages.

In recent years, Chinese authorities have acquired a stronger power base both politically and diplomatically in the Himalayan region.[33] Beijing's realist policy toward the Dalai Lama is best summarized by an official on the Nationalities Affairs Committee of the State Council: "*Qiangqi* (capture the moral high ground), *suozhu* (lock in), and *tuokua* (wear down)."[34] This kind of realism leads to dirty politics, perpetuates the Tibet problem, leaves normative issues out, and fails to provide any moral ground for China's Tibet policy.

The discourse of human rights, however, is eager to engage normative issues and criticizes Chinese policies on Tibet from a moral high ground. In

the Sino-Tibetan Frontier," *History of Religions* 48:1 (2008), pp. 77–79; Charlene E. Makley, "Gendered Boundaries in Motion: Space and Identity on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier," *American Ethnologist* 30:4 (November 2003), pp. 597–619; Ashild Kolas, "'Class' in Tibet: Creating Social Order before and during the Mao Era," *Identities—Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10:2 (April 2003), pp. 181–200.

29. See Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, eds., *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, vol. 3, Proceedings of the 10th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford (2003); Melvyn C. Goldstein, "Tibet, China, and the United States: Reflections on the Tibet Question," Occasional Paper, Atlantic Council of the United States (April 1995); and Dibyesh Anand, "Strategic Hypocrisy: The British Imperial Scripting of Tibet's Geopolitical Identity," *Journal of Asian Studies* 68:1 (February 2009), pp. 227–52.

30. For detailed controversial studies of the topic, see Baogang He and Barry Sautman, "The Politics of the Dalai Lama's New Initiative for Autonomy," *Pacific Affairs* 78:4 (Winter 2005–2006), pp. 601–29; and Laurence Brahm, "Conciliatory Dalai Lama Expounds on Winds of Change," *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), March 14, 2005, A4.

31. Dawa Norbu, *China's Tibet Policy* (New York: Routledge/Curzon, 2002).

32. Robert Thurman, *Why the Dalai Lama Matters: His Act of Truth as the Solution for China, Tibet, and the World* (New York: Atria Book, 2008); Orville Schell, "Chinese Puzzle—Why Won't Beijing Make Peace with the Dalai Lama?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 24, 2001; and John K. Knaus, "China's Opportunity to Resolve Tibet Issue," *Boston Globe*, December 8, 2003, p. A13.

33. Thierry Mathou, "Tibet and Its Neighbors—Moving toward a New Chinese Strategy in the Himalayan Region," *Asian Survey* 45:4 (July/August 2005), pp. 503–21.

34. Jing Huang, "The Tibet Issue: An Impasse or Entrapment?" paper presented at the Roundtable on the Tibet Issue, University of Hong Kong, July 29–30, 2009.

1959, the U.S. counseled Tibetan exiles that they could get more political mileage by emphasizing human rights rather than sovereignty.[35] This had rather little impact at the time. Since 1987 the use of human rights language has been actively advocated and accepted by a number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Nowadays, discussion on the Tibet issue in the West is predominantly framed by human rights. Michael Davis, for example, drew on the new U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in recommending a change in China's policy toward Tibet by establishing a more genuine system of autonomy there.[36] To argue that the source of the Tibet issue is a failure to protect human rights is a kind of normative thinking that transforms complex Tibetan issues into human rights issues. Often it plays up moral issues, overlooks the complexity of politics, and offers little in the way of realistic policy alternatives.[37]

Over the past decade, realism and human rights discourses have constituted two closed knowledge systems. Recycling its own ideas, each side has engendered paradigms, predetermining opinion and rationality. Although realism regards the human rights language as a disguised attempt to disrupt Chinese unity and order, human rights discourse dismisses Chinese realist thinking as an attempt to demand surrender to the authoritarianism of China. Both theories strengthen polarization, leaving little room to build up mutual trust. It is important to develop a deliberative forum to break down self-closed knowledge production systems and find a way out of the predicament.

Improving Current Dialogues through Social Science-based Public Deliberation

A deliberative approach to minority rights issues in Xinjiang Province was called for by Justin J. Stein, who argues that "CCP [Chinese Communist Party] rhetoric regarding the unity and apparently utopian quality of interactions between various nationalities should be replaced by a more genuine

35. John B. Roberts, "The Secret War over Tibet," *American Spectator* 30:12 (1997), p. 34.

36. Michael Davis, "Establishing a Workable Autonomy in Tibet," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30:2 (2008), pp. 227–58; also see Tibetan Commission on Human Rights and Development (TCHRD), *Impoverishing Tibetans: China's Flawed Economic Policy in Tibet* (Dharamsala: TCHRD, 2000); Pierre Hassner, "Rights of Man, Nationalism, and Balances of Power: Chechnya, Kosovo, Tibet," *Espirit,* no. 5 (2008), pp. 24–28.

37. Also see Baogang He, "Minority Rights with Chinese Characteristics," in *Multiculturalism in Asia*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Baogang He (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 56–79.

discourse reflective of vying interests and preferences."[38] In the past decade, the Dalai Lama himself has made a number of significant efforts to talk with Han Chinese scholars in the U.S. and beyond.[39] Even earlier, in 1988, Wu Jinghua, the former party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), organized a series of "heart to heart" meetings with representatives of the major monasteries to hear their grievances. Wu paid a price, becoming dubbed a "Lama Secretary"[40] and being removed from his position a few months later.

In 2009 and 2010, Beijing sent a number of official delegations to major international cities to host a series of talks on China's Tibet policy. (A quick online search for the term "Sino-Tibetan dialogue" on March 20, 2009, brought up a list of 24,700 items.) Such meetings could potentially reduce mutual distrust, explore new thinking and initiatives, and provide a basis for the development of a deliberative approach. Nevertheless, most of the dialogues ended in rhetorical stalemate.[41] Some were designed to promote and reinforce the fixed view of one side.[42] Others remained consultative and were oriented toward elites rather than citizens.

The limitations of elite dialogue give rise to a need for public deliberation in which critical intellectuals and scholars, ordinary citizens, and students can consider and perhaps change their views and follow reason-based argument. Elsewhere, I have examined the extent to which some dialogues are deliberative.[43] Here, I stress that dialogue can and should be made deliberative through well-designed public discussion, as developed below.

DESIGN AND SAMPLING OF THE DELIBERATIVE EXPERIMENT

A public deliberation that meets the requirements of deliberative democracy must be well designed to ensure that it fulfills the principles of representation, openness, transparency, equality, and fairness.

38. Justin J. Stein, "Taking the Deliberative Turn in China: International Law, Minority Rights, and the Case of Xinjiang," *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 14 (2003).

39. Zhang Weiguo, ed., *Icebreaking: Dialogue with the Dalai Lama* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for China in the 21st Century, 1999).

40. S. K Bahl, "China's Failure in Tibet: Pulls and Pressures in Domestic Politics," *China Report* 25:3 (1989), p. 286.

41. Rabgey and Sharlho, "Sino-Tibetan Dialogue."

42. This is the personal experience of this author from several workshops and conferences.

43. Baogang He and David Hundt, "A Deliberative Approach to Northeast Asia's Contested History," paper presented at the American Political Science Association Meeting, Boston, Mass., 2008.

To ensure equitable representation, random selection is the best method. Originally, I thought this could be done easily, given the vast number of Chinese students in Australian universities. It soon turned out to be impractical and disappointing. Around major cities in the world including Canberra, thousands of Chinese students participated in what they regarded as the patriotic cause of defending China against the Dalai Lama and his supporters in March and April 2008. But when they were offered an opportunity to explore the reasons why Tibetans protested against Beijing Olympic Games and to participate in finding a solution to the Tibet problem, they showed indifference. This indifference can be explained in a number of ways. It might have been because of the mutual suspicion that built up around the conflicts during the Olympic Torch relay. Fear of consequences for participating in the project, which might occur when they returned to China, also played a part. So did political propaganda casting the Dalai Lama as an "enemy" and the Chinese political culture, which tells students not to discuss sensitive issues like Tibet during their time abroad. The indifference from many Chinese students gives rise to a worrying concern that Chinese students are more or less emotional but non-rational nationalists.

After the impossibility of random selection became clear, I called for volunteers and was able to find 14 Tibetan students and 12 ethnic Chinese students who came from major universities in Australia. These included the Australian National University, University of Adelaide, University of Sydney, University of Technology of Sydney, Monash University, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). All were aged between 19 and 33, with the average age being 27. The demographic information about the participants is provided in Table 1 (from Survey Questions [Q] 1–6).

A few of the Chinese participants have lived in minority areas, and one or two could speak a little bit of Tibetan. Six Tibetans were recently arrived, young exiles from Tibetan areas of China, while three were born of mixed marriages of Tibetan and Australian parents. This explains why most of the Tibetan participants were able to speak Chinese at the level of basic conversation. It was interesting to observe that most of the volunteer Chinese participants showed a great interest in developing their knowledge. The survey result showed that they made more changes in their opinions than their Tibetan counterparts. By contrast, the newly exiled Tibetans tended to want to "teach Chinese [persons] about the real situation"; they were more radical in demanding complete independence than other Tibetans. Interestingly, the

TABLE 1. Demographic Information (from Survey Questions 1–6)

	Ethnic Chinese (%)	Tibetans (%)
Q1 Gender		
male	75	79
female	25	21
Q2 Education		
secondary school	0	29
undergraduate degree	42	57
postgraduate degree	58	14
Q3 Visited Tibetan area before	0	46
Q4 Visited Han Chinese area before	100	23
Q5 Speak Mandarin	100	92
Q6 Speak Tibetan	8	69

SOURCE: By author.

three second-generation Tibetan exiles from the mixed marriages were more moderate and tended to change their opinions based on rational judgment. Nevertheless, they shared with the rest of the Tibetans the aspiration for the preservation and development of Tibetan culture. Certainly, there appeared to be two different levels of knowledge, language, and experience in the Tibetan group. But given the anonymity of the data, it is impossible to disaggregate the data to isolate and reflect upon the differences between second-generation Tibetans and China-educated Tibetans.

To ensure frank deliberation, anonymity was guaranteed. Most Chinese participants are going back to China (three had returned by the time of writing). In order to ensure that the Chinese (as well Tibetan) students could speak out freely without fear of political risk, all their names were kept private, and they filled out the survey questionnaire anonymously.

To ensure high quality deliberation, it is necessary to give participants as much information as possible. All participants were provided with a 275-page reading packet a month prior to the workshop and encouraged to read as much of the material as possible before their arrival. The packet contained a mixture of 16 scholarly articles, official government documents, and newspaper stories—an *equal* number from both Tibetan and Chinese sources. The items were carefully selected by the organizers to provide participants with detailed and balanced perspectives on the Tibet issue.

To meet the fairness and equality principles, two facilitators were chosen, Baogang He, who has a Chinese background, and Lobsang Sangay, who has a Tibetan background. They were not to put forward their own ideas but were to make sure that all participants had equal time to speak and to prevent domination by one or two persons. They were required to lead the participants to appreciate the perspectives of others, give reasons in good faith, and implement the following rules: "listen to others carefully"; "don't interrupt when others are speaking"; "everyone has a chance to talk and must express his/her view sincerely"; "be fully committed to rational discussion and avoid an emotional attack on others"; and "try to give concrete examples and evidence." Most times, the two facilitators maintained neutrality in leading the discussions and presenting both sides of the argument, which the survey results confirm. Occasionally, however, one facilitator did put forward his own view, which may have affected the process.

In order to identify and measure whether the participants changed their opinions, two surveys were carried out. Before the deliberation, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to record their opinions and positions on a number of issues. After the deliberation, the participants were asked to complete the same questionnaire once more and to answer a few new questions about the *process* of deliberation.

The deliberative workshop began with a general introduction by Professor Baogang He, followed by an address by Professor Damien Kingsbury, who talked about how Indonesia managed the issues of East Timor and Aceh. Then the participants were divided into two groups, each made up of half Tibetans and half ethnic Chinese. The two facilitators led the groups through a series of sessions designed to give the participants greater knowledge and understanding of each other, their personal and family backgrounds, and the historical events and leaders who have shaped those backgrounds.

The first day focused on Tibetan and ethnic Chinese perspectives on the Tibet situation. The uses and limitations of history in resolving conflict and the myth of objective historical "truth" were examined. The second day focused on the Dalai Lama's "Middle Way" policy. The workshop concluded with an intellectual exercise in which Tibetan students were asked to imagine what they would recommend to Chinese President Hu Jintao on handling the Tibet issue, if they were his policy advisers. Ethnic Chinese participants, on the other hand, were required to consider how they would act if they were policy advisers to the Dalai Lama. This exercise was

intended to force the participants to look at the issue from the perspective of others.

To enhance the deliberative capacities of the participants, Baogang He suggested three "ladders" for them. The first ladder related to their ability to express and reflect each of their views critically. The second ladder required the participants to go beyond their own perspectives in search of a diversity of opinions. In placing oneself in the position of another, it is important to consider whether the views of others are convincing and whether one should modify his/her own views as a result. The third ladder involved the synthesis of competing views in a systematic manner, in order to develop a balanced view on the complexity of the Tibet issue.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge Gained

In comparing the results of the first and second surveys, it can be seen that both the ethnic Chinese and Tibetan students increased their level of knowledge substantively (see Table 2).[44] This knowledge gain might be an indicator of improving mutual understanding, which in turn helps to increase the level of mutual trust. However, both ethnic Chinese and Tibetan knowledge dropped slightly for two questions, which might be accounted for by lapses in memory.

Increased Mutual Trust

Both the ethnic Chinese and Tibetan students increased the level of mutual trust, even when discussing the controversial issue of Tibetan autonomy. The ethnic Chinese participants were asked whether "most Tibetans are trustworthy" (see Table 3, Q31).

On a scale where 0 is "strongly disagree," 5 is in the middle, and 10 is "strongly agree," the mean value increased from 4.25 in the first survey before

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44. The questionnaire had six factual questions to test the knowledge level of the participants. Question 8 is "In which year did the Dalai Lama propose the Middle Way policy?" Question 9 is "Did Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping say that apart from the question of independence, all other issues could be discussed and all problems can be resolved?" Question 10 is "Under the Dalai Lama's autonomy proposal, which of the following areas of government would remain the responsibility of the central Chinese government?" Questions 11a, b, c are about the range of autonomy rights in China's Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities adopted on May 31, 1984.

TABLE 2. Knowledge Gained (Based on Survey Questions 8–11)

	Chinese		Tibetans	
	1st Survey	*2nd Survey*	*1st Survey*	*2nd Survey*
Q8	8.3	50	92.9	85.7
Q9	75	91.7	92.9	85.7
Q10	83.89	78.6	75	92.9
Q11-a	66.7	91.7	64.3	78.6
Q11-b	58.3	91.7	35.7	64.3
Q11-c	66.7	58.3	50	71.4

SOURCE: By author.

the deliberation to 6 in the second survey after the deliberation. The mean value for the Tibetan respondents on the question of whether "most Chinese are trustworthy" (Q33) increased from 4.5 to 6. The mean value for the Tibetan respondents improved from 5 to 8 regarding the statement that "most Chinese I have met are trustworthy" (Q35). This closely mirrored the results of the deliberative poll in Northern Ireland, as discussed earlier.

When we examined the transcript of the group discussion, it became clear that throughout the process, almost all participants expressed a view on the importance of trust. What we, the researchers, believe to have been the enhancement of mutual trust came through the recognition of the reasonableness of the other party. Anecdotal evidence showed that in the beginning, some ethnic Chinese students were angered by the "unbelievably unreasonable" Tibetan protests over the Beijing Olympics. Likewise, some Tibetans felt that that the ethnic Chinese students did not understand the Tibetans' quest for justice and that their actions were intended to deliver a strong message to the world. After three days of contact and deliberation, each side found the other side equipped with reasoning capacity.

The result was very positive. At the end of the event, each side found that the other side had a reasonable argument. With regard to the question of whether "most Tibetans are open to reason" (Q30), the mean value of the ethnic Chinese respondents increased from 2.67 in the first survey to 6 in the second. In contrast, the mean value of the Tibetan respondents increased from 4.4 to 6, a rather small indicator of change, on the question of whether "most Chinese are open to reason" (Q32).

TABLE 3. Mean Value of the Surveyed Questions

	Chinese Students		Tibetan Students	
	Before	After	Before	After
Q12 Critics of the Chinese government say that China should allow Tibet to have autonomy, in order to preserve its traditional culture and allow the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. (Strongly agree = 0, Strongly disagree = 10)	4.3	4.08	2.8	1.4
Q13 The Chinese government says that Tibet has long been part of China, that Tibet has benefited from modernization, and that the Dalai Lama should not be allowed to return because he aims to split Tibet from China. (Strongly agree = 0, Strongly disagree = 10)	3.83**	5.83**	8.4	7.57
Q14 Is the Dalai Lama's autonomy proposal sincere? (0 = not at all sincere, 5 = median level, 10 = most sincere)	5.42	4.75	9.7	10
Q15 Do you believe that the Chinese government is serious about the Dalai Lama's autonomy proposals? (Not serious = 0, Serious = 10)	5.25**	7.08**	1.2	2.29
Q16 Do you believe that the Dalai Lama is seeking independence in the guise of autonomy? (0 = to seek independence, 5 = median level, 10 = not to seek independence)	3.92	3.92	9.9	9.3
Q17 Is autonomy the best option for Tibet? (0 = the worst, 5 = in the middle, 10 = the best)	6.33	5.8	7.7	7.4
Q18 Is independence the best option for Tibet? (0 = the worst, 5 = the middle, 10 = the best)	1.67*	0.3*	6.8	6
Q19 Is the current situation the best option for Tibet? (0 = the worst, 5 = in the middle, 10 = the best)	4.5	3.5	0.4	1
Q20 Should Tibetans be allowed to display photos of the Dalai Lama in temples? (0 = strong disapproval, 5 = in the middle level, 10 = strong approval)	6.5	7.58	10	10
Q21 Should schools in Tibetan areas be encouraged to teach Tibetan? (0 = strong disapproval, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strong approval)	9.67*	8.5*	10	9.5
Q22 Should schools in Tibetan areas be encouraged to teach in Tibetan rather than in Mandarin? (0 = strong disapproval, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strong approval)	5.58	3.92	9.4*	7.5*

TABLE 3. Mean Value of the Surveyed Questions (Continued)

	Chinese Students		Tibetan Students	
	Before	After	Before	After
Q23 Tibetans don't understand the Chinese perspective on Tibet. (0 = strongly agree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly disagree)	2.58	3.17	6.6	6
Q24 Westerners don't understand the Chinese perspective on Tibet. (0 = strongly agree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly disagree)	3.8	2.5	5.9	6
Q25 Chinese don't understand the Tibetan issue. (0 = strongly agree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly disagree)	5.3	6.33	2.2	2
Q26 Are you pessimistic or optimistic about the future of China? (0 = very pessimistic, 5 = neither pessimistic nor optimistic, 10 = very optimistic)	8	7.7	6	6
Q27 Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Tibet? (0 = very pessimistic, 5 = in the middle, 10 = very optimistic)	7	6	8.2	7
Q28 Most people in Australia are open to reason. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = neither agree nor disagree, 10 = strongly agree)	7.5	6.4	7.6	8
Q29 Most people in Australia are trustworthy. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	6.67	7	6	7
Q30 Most Tibetans are open to reason. 0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	2.67*	6*	8.7	8.5
Q31 Most Tibetans are trustworthy. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	4.25**	6**	7.9	9
Q32 Most Chinese are open to reason. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	5.3	6	4.4*	6*
Q33 Most Chinese are trustworthy. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	6.7	7	4.5	6
Q34 Most Tibetans I have met are reasonable. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	3.75*	7*	10	8
Q35 Most Chinese I have met are trustworthy. (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = in the middle, 10 = strongly agree)	7.5	7	5**	8**

SOURCE: By author.

NOTE: "Before" refers to the mean scores of the first survey before deliberation; "After" refers to the mean scores of the second survey after deliberation. T-tests of the difference in mean scores on the above questions at the two stages showed that while some marked * were significant at the p = 0.07 level, others marked ** achieved p scores of 0.15, and many remained unchanged.

Moderating Effect

The deliberation workshop produced a moderating effect. When two groups in a divided society are separated, their emotions are fully charged and they see things through a fixed angle without considering the perspectives of others. When the ethnic Chinese and Tibetan groups came together in small group discussions, however, an immediate moderating effect became apparent. The use of English as the communicative language also promoted moderation because neither group was communicating in its native language. Many participants thus were unable to express their anger and emotions easily (of course, one could also argue that this would have made people suppress their feelings). The facilitators played a role in controlling any extreme behavior and in encouraging a greater understanding of others.

One example of the moderating effect was the discussion about competing interpretations of history. While the Tibetan participants held the view that China invaded Tibet and carried out a colonization policy, the ethnic Chinese participants clung to the idea that China liberated Tibet from the serf system and carried out socialist reform there. These two views possibly, but not necessarily, were the product of official indoctrination, and were likely to be reinforced if one group had no contact with the other group. Consequently, this kind of knowledge was reproduced within an isolated and closed environment.

When the two groups were put together to exchange opinions, however, members of each recognized alternative views immediately, and the matter became much more complex than was originally thought. As a result, five or six students did critically examine two interpretations of the disputed history and questioned the role of history. When it was recognized that each interpretation contains partial truth, it became more difficult to make a strong and exclusive argument. As a result, a compromise was preferred, which tends to soften radical political positions. In this way, deliberation was able to reduce the level of radicalization and achieve a middle ground.

Enhanced Deliberative Capacities

The deliberative workshop succeeded in enhancing deliberative capacities. Quite a few participants from both sides agreed that a power-sharing mechanism might be a realistic solution to deal with the current predicament. The participants were able to develop a diversity of views, considering the perspectives of others and changing their own positions and opinions. For example,

there was a convergence on policy issues over the display of religious photographs and also over the language of school instruction. The participants were asked whether Tibetans should be allowed to display photos of the Dalai Lama in temples (Q20). Before deliberation, the ethnic Chinese participants scored a mean of 6.5. By contrast, the Tibetan participants scored the highest possible approval grade of 10. After deliberation, there was a clear shift in the approval of the ethnic Chinese participants, with the mean increasing to 7.58.

With regard to the teaching of Tibetan in schools in Tibetan areas (Q21), the mean approval scores for both the ethnic Chinese and Tibetan participants dropped. While both strongly favored Tibetan being taught in schools in Tibetan areas, the scores dropped slightly, from 9.67 to 8.5 for the ethnic Chinese and from 10 to 9.5 for the Tibetans.

Before deliberation, ethnic Chinese participants scored a mean of 6.33 when asked whether autonomy was the best option for Tibet (Q17); after deliberation, the mean score dropped to 5.8. A similar trend emerged when considering whether independence was the best option for Tibet (Q18). Initially, the ethnic Chinese participants recorded a mean score of 1.67 while the Tibetan participants scored 6.8. Subsequent to the deliberative workshops, the mean scores declined to 0.3 and 6, respectively.

Consensus and Process

The deliberative workshop reached a consensus on a number of issues, including the undesirability of using force, the importance of establishing mutual trust, and the necessity of compromise. Several participants said that despite the different perspectives, the future can be changed through mutual trust and compromise. Interestingly, both sides shared a similar mean value on a number of questions: whether they were optimistic about the future of China (Q26) and the future of Tibet (Q27), and if they thought that most people in Australia were open to reason (Q28) and were trustworthy (Q29).

The participants said that they greatly appreciated the process. When asked a series of questions on a 0–10 scale, where 0 indicated "generally a waste of time" and 10 meant "extremely valuable," the participants gave the small-group discussions an average rating of 8.88 and the entire three days' deliberation an average rating of 8.31. They also thought the process considered their views very equally. On a 1–5 scale, where 1 is very equal and 5 is very unequal, the average answer for whether the "small group moderator

provide[d] everyone with an equal opportunity for discussion" was 1.46, and the average for whether the group members were, in fact, equal in the discussion was 2.04.

THE LIMITS OF DELIBERATION

Some aspects of deliberative results have fallen short of the ideal of deliberative democracy. Experiments that fail to fully capture this ideal in this forum are indicated by the continuation of polarization, the absence of change in the value issues, and the continual recitation of official views. With regard to a number of main issues such as cultural identity, foreign intervention, and autonomy, there is a tendency for the two groups to polarize (see Table 3, Q12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 22). Although the participants changed their opinions on policy and attitude issues between tests 1 and 2, value issues remained largely unchanged.

Tibetan participants insisted that the boundary of Tibetan autonomy should include all Tibetan areas, including those located in China outside the TAR, while the ethnic Chinese participants thought such a view unrealistic and likely to damage China's unity. The ethnic Chinese participants regarded Beijing's efforts in Tibet as laudable modernization. One participant expressed the view that minorities should not feel pain about losing their cultural identity because Han Chinese cultural identity is also lost daily through globalization. By contrast, some Tibetan participants asserted that unless the people of China recognize that China occupied Tibet, Tibetans will continue to feel patronized.

No change of opinion among the ethnic Chinese participants was recorded on the question of regarding autonomy as a disguise for independence. Two reasons account for this. First, the Tibetan participants failed to convince the others during small-group discussions with their explanations on the involvement of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Tibet.[45] Rather, one Tibetan recounted the story of India's transition from self-rule to independence. This only served to strengthen the view of the ethnic Chinese participants that autonomy is a camouflage for independence. Second, the Tibetan participants associated autonomy with independence. This is

45. The CIA encouraged, trained, and controlled Tibet's resistance movement. See Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

demonstrated by the fact that the questions "Is autonomy the best option for Tibet?" (Q17) and "Is independence the best option for Tibet?" (Q18) received similar scores: the mean value for the former was 7.7 and for the latter, 6.8.

The deliberative workshop reveals that the nature of the issue itself has an impact on the deliberation process and outcome. The national identity issue is different from social policy issues. The former is concerned with sovereignty and nationalism; the latter is about the preferences, needs, and demands of daily life. Value and identity attitudes are difficult to change quickly through deliberation, while social policy preference can be changed through public deliberation and consultation.

Although quite a few participants did move away from the official line, some Tibetans and ethnic Chinese continued to repeat the official views. The opinions of individuals are sometimes shaped by the communities or social positions to which they belong. One ethnic Chinese participant articulated this well: "I fully understand and support the principle of self-determination from my personal experience of being a Han Chinese, a member of minority in Russia, Xinjiang, and Australia, but I will not support the Tibetan cause."[46]

The examination of historical evidence and competing claims proved to be difficult. These complicated historical disputes have not been solved by historians and scholars after years of research, let alone by Tibetans and ethnic Chinese students after one weekend of deliberation. It is unrealistic for students to solve all the problems associated with the Tibet issue, and it is impractical to expect change in value and full development of deliberative capacity within two or three days. The restricted time frame for the workshops meant that participants were unable to fully synthesize the intellectual arguments.

The fundamental limitation is the application to nationality conflict issues of the deliberative approach, since it is alien in the Chinese context. The central government has been the dominating and sole arbiter on nationality questions. A pessimist might hold that the nature of authoritarianism is hostility toward deliberation and truthfulness; radical Tibetans may see deliberation as empty talk.[47]

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46. The source for this is a note taken by Baogang He.

47. Lobsang Yeshi of the pro-independence Tibetan Youth Congress complains that Tibetans are allowed "talks about talks," but when they finally explain their position they are condemned. See M. C. Davis, "Establishing a Workable Autonomy in Tibet," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30:2 (2008), p. 257.

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed and compared three deliberative approaches to conflict and applied the deliberative approach to the Tibet issue. It examined the case of a deliberative workshop on the Tibet issue and highlighted the achievements and limits of deliberative conflict resolution mechanisms. Deliberative dialogue improved knowledge and mutual understanding, enhanced mutual trust and deliberative capacities, and produced moderating effects. It provided quantitative evidence that Han-Tibetan mistrust can be significantly reduced through deliberative discussion and reflective interaction, and offered *some* potential for repairing a distrusting relationship between the ethnic Chinese and Tibetan communities. The participants may still be locked into a polarized position on independence and sovereignty issues, but the level of polarization over social and cultural policies can be reduced.

Citizen deliberation would be in the interest of both the Chinese government, which needs to develop its soft power and improve its international reputation, and the Dalai Lama, who has called for Tibetans to befriend the ethnic Chinese to gain more supporters among them. Moreover, local governments within China under pressure to heal the social rift have been introducing a variety of deliberative forums to address local policy issues.[48] It is evidently possible for the Chinese government to employ more heart-to-heart forums that would help ease ethnic tension and build a harmonious society.

In addition, citizen-initiated deliberative forums can take place outside the existing institutions of the nation-state.[49] Small talks with limited numbers of people can begin with friendship associations or local communities such as those in Australia, Canada, the U.S., and many European countries. One dialogue forum in Hong Kong[50] has already produced a number of

48. See Baogang He, "Participatory and Deliberative Institutions in China," in Ethan and He, *The Search for Deliberative Democracy*, pp. 176–96; James Fishkin, Baogang He, Bob Ruskin, and Alice Siu, "Deliberative Democracy in an Unlikely Place," *British Journal of Political Science* 40:2 (2010), pp. 435–48.

49. Tashi Rabgey, "Newtibet.com: Citizenship as Agency in a Virtual Tibetan Public," conference paper presented at Tibet and Contemporary World, the University of British Columbia, April 18–20, 2004.

50. I was invited to participate in this dialogue forum organized by the University of Hong Kong, July 29–30, 2009.

innovative ideas such as a "Tibetan Special Cultural Zone" to address the current stalemate.

Ideally, talks would naturally progress into the Tibetan region itself, where the daily practical needs of citizens can be more directly addressed.[51] In the short term, "irrelevant discussions" are not geared at all toward finding resolutions for complicated issues. Rather, they break down barriers and resentment, encourage mutual understanding, trust, and cooperative behavior, and lay the ground work for more official work. Deliberative workshops can break down self-closed knowledge production systems while fostering a new flexible, critical generation. Deliberations practiced widely in the public sphere can give form to new terms and concepts, create discourses favorable to resolution, raise public consciousness, and eventually penetrate the political sphere, influencing state policy and action in an informal, indirect way.[52]

51. With regard to concrete proposals, see Rabgey and Sharlho, "Sino-Tibetan Dialogue," pp. 46–47.

52. Dryzek, "Deliberative Democracy in Divided Societies."