Research Seminar

‘Implications for China's International Relations from the Disturbances in the Tibetan Areas and Ürümqi, 2008-2009’.

By: Professor Emeritus Colin Mackerras, Department of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith University.

In March 2008 there were disturbances all over the Tibetan areas of China, and in July 2009 there were large-scale riots in Xinjiang, though only in the capital Ürümqi. Although Western specialists and journalists tended to put the responsibility on Chinese oppression in both cases, Chinese authorities blamed the disturbances in the Tibetan areas of China in March 2008 on ‘the Dalai clique’ and the July 2009 riots in Ürümqi on Rebiya Kadeer and the World Uyghur Congress of which she is president.

In both cases, China’s international relations were affected. There were similarities and differences between the two periods of disturbance, and the paper will offer some detailed discussion. One of these differences was that the coming Olympic Games (August 2008) overshadowed the Tibetan disturbances, while the Games were in the past by the time of the 2009 riots in Ürümqi.

China has suffered persistent criticism for its policies on Tibet and Xinjiang. Nevertheless, this paper argues that, from a long-term point of view, there were also some benefits for China’s foreign affairs reflected in the two sets of disturbances. In particular, reaction to China’s suppression of the Ürümqi riots was much less harsh than had been the case the year before over Tibet. China was able to win some concessions from several major world powers over Tibet. In foreign relations, the two sets of disturbances worsened China’s image but, in world power terms, both reflected and increased China’s rising global influence.

Professor Emeritus Colin Mackerras AO worked at Griffith University from 1974 to 2004. He has taught about China, and researched written extensively about it, especially its ethnic minorities, theatre and history, as well as Australia-China relations. He has published numerous books, articles and book chapters about Chinese and Asian affairs.

→ Wednesday 15 September 2010
→ N72, Meeting Room -1.18
→ Nathan campus
→ 12.30 -1.50pm

To RSVP, please contact Natasha Vary on (07) 3735 5322 or n.vary@griffith.edu.au no later than 5.00pm Monday 13 September 2010.