

## **Abstract**

### **Three Potential Wellsprings of Welfare: China's Minimum Livelihood Guarantee in Comparative Perspective**

This lecture will posit three disparate motivations governments may entertain in their execution of welfare programs, particularly programs of social assistance which are targeted at indigent populations and that, unlike insurance programs, do not entail contributions from recipients: 1) they may extend assistance to needy persons on the basis of the principle of the rights of the individual, or social citizenship rights — or, on the basis of the Confucian concept of rites (the rite of benevolence); 2) they may supply protections and grant benefits (such as educational and health care benefits) in order to enhance the productivity of the nation; and 3) they may offer subsidies for the purpose of pacifying anger and silencing demands on the part of the poor.

Professor Dorothy J Solinger argues that the intended beneficiaries of these three types of projects are, respectively, isolated individuals; society/the state writ large; and politicians. She uses this categorization to discuss and distinguish official hand-outs in three historical times: state charity in traditional, imperial times; funds for the impoverished during the Republican era and during the early PRC; and the current policy of aid for the poverty-stricken (the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee program, colloquially termed the *dibao*). She finds that, whereas a kind of notion of right to governmental protection adhered under dynastic rule according to the Confucian notion of the rite of benevolence, and Republican and early PRC leaders understood the help they provided as geared toward strengthening the nation, today's political elite bestow financial aid mainly in hope of preempting disturbances and "instability".