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China's Hard and Soft Power in its East Asian Peripheral Diplomacy

Panel: East Asian Hard and Soft Power

China's Peripheral Diplomacy is targeted at China's nearest neighbors, a zone where countries are most anxious about rising Chinese military capacity. This inner ring around China is also a zone for economic integration, treating relations with China as an economic opportunity, and numerous initiatives such as Harmonious East Asia and Maritime Silk Road are meant to cast China's power as a source of order in East Asia that can protect the smaller surrounding states. In October 2013, after discussions in academic seminars and a Peripheral Diplomacy work forum held by the leadership, Beijing issued its policy on peripheral diplomacy. The leadership toured Southeast Asia explaining the Maritime Silk Road. Southeast Asia, rather than remain passive recipients of Chinese initiatives, has mediated, shaped, deflected and negotiated relations with China using instruments that allow for a more equal relationship between sovereign nation states. The paper will examine China's October 2013 peripheral diplomacy, compare it to previous peripheral diplomacies, and assess how Southeast Asia has responded to this strategy.