

REAWAKENING CANADA'S CHINA POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

It is an exciting time to be talking about Canada's policy towards China. But for the first time the reason lies less in the dramatic changes occurring in China itself, which continue, but rather in the fresh thinking about China going on here in Canada. We are in one of those periods in which old alignments and assumptions are being questioned and new ones put onto the table.

This rethink is being driven partly by global factors. China's rise to greater diplomatic and economic pre-eminence, for example, is forcing Western nations to ask how they might respond to that rise in a useful fashion. American policy towards China, meanwhile, has reverted to more realist underpinnings since the terrorist attacks of September 2001, forcing other nations to take the lead on certain aspects of the China issue.

At the same time, there are distinctive domestic reasons that have turned those necessary conditions into sufficient ones. The ferment is of course linked to the election of a new Conservative government in 2006, with explicit promises to change our approach to China. But this is not a partisan issue: members of parliament from all parties,¹ as well as public opinion polls, have long shown a broad concern with the drift in our China policy. Rather, what is happening is a democratization of our China policy that reflects a more general democratization of our foreign policy (McCormick 2006). For the first time, the mandarins of Canada's China policy – Sinologists, business interests, “old friends of China,” and steady-as-she-goes bureaucrats – are being challenged by citizen-barbarians at the gates. The *zheng* (official, appropriate, civilized) is being challenged by the *ye* (wild, barbaric, uncivilized).

Let me explain why I think the *ye* best serves Canada's interests as well as those of China's people – why, in other words, the barbarians are the better diplomats – and why this moment is so critical not only for Canada's relations with China but also for the future of our place in the world.

THE PAST RECORD

In order to justify a change in policy, we need to establish what our policy has been. To do that, we need to delve into the origins of our recognition of China in 1970 and the policy that followed.

Canada is a country that likes to think of itself as having a foreign policy driven by the high ideals of liberal internationalism – what I take to be the advance of universally recognized and widely accepted human rights and the creation of effective and legitimate international institutions. In some spheres and at some times, we have fulfilled that promise. However, in the case of China, our relationship has more often failed those high ideals.

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¹ See for instance the report on human rights in China adopted by the House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee, Sub-Committee on International Human Rights, on 24 April 2007.

That failure goes back to the very origins of our official relationship with China. Virtually every scholarly work on the Canadian switch from non-recognition of China during the period of Maoist terror to recognition in 1970 has portrayed the former as an aberrant policy driven by some combination of Washington Cold War sentiments and hopelessly ignorant misunderstandings of China. The *bien pensants* of Canadian foreign policy history portray recognition as emergence from darkness into lightness. Paul Evans, for example, has written that Canada's rejection of close relations with Maoist China between 1949 and 1970 was a "Cold War problem" that Canada needed to "solve." While that policy was made in Canada, "policy advice came from officials who rarely had deep attachments to China."

An exceptional voice, Evans notes, was Chester Ronning, a Department of External Affairs official and later special envoy in Asia, who constantly urged closer ties, even solidarity, with Maoist China – including supporting its disastrous initiation of the Korean War and releasing a film based on his 1971 visit to the country praising the Cultural Revolution (Ronning 1974). Unfortunately, according to Evans, Ronning's views were "rarely shared" by the DEA or Government of Canada (Evans 1991, pp. 3, 6, 10). For Evans, and other "Old China Hands" in Canada, recognition and subsequent bilateral relations marked a heartening embrace of China's communist tyranny.

Yet recognition was not based on the promotion of liberal internationalism. Nor indeed was it based upon realistic attempts to engage with Maoist China as a rogue state needing to be contained through direct diplomacy, as has often been portrayed (Granatstein and Bothwell 1990, p. 179; Head and Trudeau 1995). Realism better characterizes the American motivations (MacMillan 2007). No doubt Canadian bureaucrats shared the realist rationale for recognition, a rationale that indeed made sense and could have been the basis for Canadian recognition of China. But the *causes* of our recognition lay elsewhere, in an unholy alliance of commercial ambition and cultural relativism.

Public opinion towards relations with China was warmed after the Canada Wheat Board sold a large lot of wheat and barley to China in 1960 worth CA\$60 million (the equivalent of CA\$420 million today, or eight percent of its total annual exports). The reason for this sale, of course, was that Mao had imposed upon China the largest famine in human history. As Canadian Wheat Board officials gleefully crunched their numbers and the *Winnipeg Free Press* proclaimed commercial salvation for the country, Mao's famine was in the process of killing between 30 and 40 million people. That unprecedented human disaster led to grain sales which helped public opinion in Canada to get over its Cold War "problem."

Pierre Trudeau's own motivations in opening links to Beijing, meanwhile, were formed during a visit to China that same year, 1960. Like the French philosopher Michael Foucault – who praised Maoist China as having formed an "intimacy" between party and people and who later engaged in a bizarre flirtation with the Iranian Revolution (Afary, Anderson, and Foucault 2005; Foucault 1980) – Trudeau harboured a deeply illiberal admiration for Mao's China. In *Deux Innocents en Chine Rouge*, later issued as *Two Innocents in Red China* (Trudeau and Hebert 1968; Trudeau and Herbert 1961), Trudeau and his traveling companion described a fantasyland where prisons were lined with "fine fragrant trees" and where "the Chinese are recovering their human dignity." The greatest famine in human history was reaching its awful height just as Trudeau and company traveled around China, yet our future prime minister sees only tables groaning under corn cake and spinach. There was some "controlled distribution of foodstuffs" in *some* places,

he admits, but this was nothing compared to the past famines under the pre-1949 governments. Why should Westerners believe “the absurdities related by their newspapers”?² Trudeau, to my knowledge, never apologized for his flippant descriptions of Maoist China.

Canada’s recognition of China, then, is a sorry episode in our post-war foreign policy. It is not too much, I believe, to say that Canada’s decline as a serious player in world affairs began with the flawed context of our recognition of China in 1970. My title, of course refers to Andrew Cohen’s description of Canadian foreign policy as “asleep” following Pearson’s defeat by Trudeau in 1968 (Cohen 2003). Canada’s rejection of close relations with Mao’s China was wholly in the spirit of liberal internationalism, while our embrace of it was a stark betrayal of that spirit. One result was that we had no formal understanding with China about the status of Taiwan, which at the time was rated a 5.5 on Freedom House’s 7-to-1 scale of civil and political liberties compared to China’s rock-bottom rating of 7.0 (today 6.5). Taiwan had held real elections for both executive and legislative power at the township and county levels since 1950 and for the provincial assembly since 1951 and had put roughly a dozen seats in both the national legislature (the Legislative Yuan) and the presidential selectorate (the National Assembly) up for direct election in 1969. To abandon democratizing Taiwan for Maoist China without any promises was shameful, one still evident in our shabby treatment of Taiwan’s representatives in Canada.

While liberal internationalist tendencies remained alive, indeed became more active, in some areas of Canadian foreign policy in the post-Pearson era, they went into deep hibernation in our policy towards China. Our ties to China were driven primarily by economic interests – demonstrated so vividly by the Team Canada business delegations put together by governments in the 1990s and early 2000s – coupled with a vague cultural relativism about the limits of international human rights – highlighted by the bilateral human rights “dialogue” after 1997. Canada’s China policy has been mercantile, unprincipled, and ineffective. We have much work to do in redefining a new relationship that represents shared universal values as well as the fundamental interests of China’s people.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In general, Canada needs to act with much greater confidence. China is not a fire-breathing dragon able to cut off our livelihoods, but a fragile and confused poor country struggling with an internal governance crisis. We have been schooled to always give Beijing face, never upbraid them, and generally let them define the relationship. This is nonsense. China needs Canada for international respectability, and a moral agenda of liberal internationalism is wholly consistent with China’s needs. We cannot have a mature and productive relationship with Beijing unless we are willing to openly state our differences and criticisms of its regime.

A second general point: the Asia-Pacific Foundation has stated that Canada’s problem in Asia as a whole, which is of course our problem in the world, is a lack of a clear identity, a lack of “branding.” Paul Evans told a parliamentary hearing in 2007 that “it is essential to establish a positive political relationship at the most senior levels” with China in order to further Canada’s aims.³ Yet the “strategic partnership,” announced during Hu Jintao’s visit to Ottawa in 2005, has been empty in substance and ineffective in furthering Canadian aims. It has worsened, not resolved, Canada’s lack of identity in the Asian region because it represents such a dreary lack of

² 21-22, 33, 61, 71, 39, 42, 122-23, 134. Trudeau admitted that “we would see only what the authorities would let us see” (3-4) and their claims were “often outrageous” (152) or “disingenuous” (44, 152). “Yet we cannot compel ourselves to believe that it is simply a matter of lying” (44).

³ 20 February 2007 hearing of House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

imagination, principles, or willpower on our part. Instead, we as a nation should reclaim our liberal internationalism and stand unambiguously on the side of Asia's democratic and rights-defending forces. Having gala state dinners in Ottawa for the party general secretary of the Communist Party of China is a mistake.

Thirdly, we need to focus on outcomes in our relationship with China instead of outputs. It may well be that a more polyphonous, pluralistic, and adversarial foreign policy towards China delivers more results. We need to avoid being drawn into the tempting Confucian dynamic of "harmonious" relations with Beijing and focus instead on achieving tangible outcomes in our relationship.

A final general point is that Canada's overall relations with China should be citizen-centered not regime-centered. We must talk to the regime as necessary, but we should feel free to talk past it to the people of China, who for the time being are the only true representatives of the Chinese citizenry. Sovereignty rests with the people and their freely chosen representatives. In China, we must do our best to adjust for the absence of the latter through a broad citizen-centered strategy. We should cultivate and favor discussions with reform-oriented figures in the party and the military, and focus our efforts on the ground in talking directly to the leading journalists, civil activists, lawyers, public intellectuals, independent scholars, interest group leaders, entrepreneurs, and local and ethnic minority leaders of that country.

The domestic counterpart to this diversification of our partners in China should be the diversification of our agents on behalf of Canada. The role of NGOs is indispensable. Provincial governments can and should also play a much larger role. In addition, Members of Parliament should play a much more active role in our relationship with China through their own official delegations, their holding of hearings, and their inclusion on government delegations. MPs interested in China should roll up their sleeves and become involved through active, working trips to China, by sitting on project evaluation committees, by holding substantive meetings with Chinese officials, and by conducting their own inspections.

SECURITY, TRADE, AND AID

Canada has engaged with China on security matters at several levels: military exchanges, non-proliferation regimes, regional confidence building in Asia, counter-terrorism, and diplomatic questions of armed intervention in violent conflicts. These contacts should continue, not only because they further liberal international aims but because they offer us an opportunity to shape China's potentially disruptive international behaviour. We need to be constructive but also realistic in our assessment of a rising China's impact on international security. Blind containment and blind acceptance are both wrong. We need to engage China carefully and thoughtfully.

Canada should work to steer China in the direction of "peaceful rise," which means both engagement and criticism. China is a particularly norm-sensitive rising power and Canada can help build the norms that China will seek to adhere to. Canada should push for more transparency in China's rapidly growing defence budget and encourage Beijing to hold direct talks with Taiwan's leadership. Chinese military leaders, who so often visit CFB Kingston and Royal Military College, should leave with an earful of Canadian concerns. Again, this means taking ourselves more seriously as a major security player in the Asian region in particular.



On trade and economic matters, Paul Evans has stated that our trade and investment relations with China will thrive even if there is a cooler political relationship.⁴ China's commercial decisions are purely pragmatic, and the only exceptions to this rule are in highly regulated areas like financial services and major infrastructure projects. In those areas, Beijing has tended to play off Western powers against one another. However, there is a growing sense in the West of not being willing to play ball anymore and Canada should be at the forefront of this sea-change in attitudes. In any case, blaming politics for the Canadian business sector's underperformance in China is unfounded and ignores the more compelling explanation, namely a lack of commitment to that market compared to other medium-sized developed countries such as Australia.

We should also work harder to ensure that our trade and investment relations with China fulfil the minimal requirements of liberal internationalism. There needs to be much closer monitoring of our high tech exports to China, especially those sold to the coercive apparatus, in particular the police – as Nortel does. We should be more willing to prosecute individuals caught spying for China or stealing Canada's technology for China, and to tighten laws to make this possible – moves which have netted dozens of successful prosecutions of Chinese espionage in the United States in the past decade. We need to develop stricter corporate accountability standards for Canadian companies operating in China, especially for those in resources industries. In particular, we should deeply scrutinize the activities of Canadian multinationals operating in Xinjiang, such as Majestic Gold or Delta Resources. We need to pay more attention to similar involvements in Tibet – Power Corporation, Nortel, and Bombardier, for instance, all supplied equipment to the new Beijing–Lhasa railway before it was endorsed by the Dalai Lama. We should encourage our pension funds and insurance companies to divest from companies like Petro-China, which was involved in stoking the violence in Darfur.

Canadian aid projects should not be funded in Tibet or Xinjiang without the open consent of groups representing Tibetan and Uighur people outside of China. There can be no moral way to engage with the state in these regions without their express consent and approval. How can a country like ours that is so sensitive to the needs of its own indigenous peoples turn a blind eye to the repression and destruction of these indigenous cultures in China? At present the IDRC funds a water management project in Xinjiang. They should suspend that project until they have it assessed by Uighur groups and can show that it meets guidelines similar to those proposed for projects in Tibet by the Tibetan government in Dharmasala. More broadly, Canada should keep the China Communist Party's (CCP) feet to the fire on Tibet, which remains one of the greatest threats to China's long-term stability precisely because the lack of sufficient external pressure has allowed Beijing to avoid an enduring solution to the problem.

As part of being more socially responsible in our economic relations with China, we should also engage in a massive effort to help China with its greenhouse gas emissions problem. We can do far more for global warming in this way than by reducing our own admissions, even to zero. We need to go well beyond the "sell Canadian technology" approach to greenhouse gas emissions in China and make it part of the political dialogue with them. Our concern should be global warming first and Canadian technology exports second. This is not about stoking export sales but about averting global environmental catastrophe.

⁴ House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Subcommittee on International Human Rights, Hearing 20 February 2007.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Canada can and should be doing much more to promote democracy and human rights in China. We should aim to have a flourishing democracy and rights relationship with China alongside flourishing security/diplomacy and economic relationships. Again, this would signal a maturing of the relationship and China's acceptance that a "responsible great power" must be responsible in this realm as any other. Razmik Panossian of Rights and Democracy in Montreal argues that human rights should be at the center of the Canada-China relationship.⁵ Indeed, in a poll conducted by the Asia-Pacific Foundation in 2006, 72 percent of Canadians agreed that the government should make human rights and democracy a priority in Asia, while a further 58 percent endorsed the use of trade sanctions against Asia's non-democratic regimes.⁶

The world community long ago established universally recognized definitions for democracy and human rights, and those universal criteria are today widely evident from survey research. China, as a UN member and signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, agrees to abide by those yardsticks. There are certain fundamentals in these areas that brook no local interpretation by autocrats claiming to represent distinctive cultural values. In any case, there is much evidence that China is moving in the direction of democracy, slowly but surely. Debates on political reform in China are inevitably debates about democracy. The domestic discourse in China is about how and when, not whether, to embrace democracy. Our cultural relativism is out of step with China's cultural universalism. As a bipartisan parliamentary report of 2007 put it: "Canada should carefully consider how it might support democratic transition in China, the stirrings of which are already apparent."⁷

From a certain perspective the pursuit of democracy and rights in China is hard-headed realism: democratic and rights-respecting states are better for world peace and better for stable and successful domestic development than are autocracies. But we need to be honest: democratizing states may be sources of global instability and sometimes the pursuit of rights will indeed harm Canada-China economic or security ties. Let's not fool ourselves that the pursuit of a more just and consensual state in China has no cost – it does. But it is probably small.

The aim of democracy and rights promotion is not to "impose" anything on China that it has not already agreed to promote through its membership in the United Nations and associated organizations. Nor is the aim to specify how democracy or rights are to be realized in China. Rather the aim is to empower the Chinese people to decide on the timing and nature of their own democracy and rights development. At present, they lack that power. Canada's role is to provide encouragement and support for rights-defenders and democracy-advocates in China in order to counter-balance the state oppression that they face. The public square in China is today dominated by the propaganda and oppression of the communist state. To truly respect the sovereignty of the Chinese people is to work hard to open up the public square to the voices of the people of China.

It is important to remember that our concern here is the human rights of China's people as a whole. When we allow the rights emphasis to be dominated by concern for a particular Canadian citizen trapped in China's abusive system – such as Huseyin Celil – then rights become merely

⁵ House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Subcommittee on International Human Rights, Hearing, 31 October 2006.

⁶ Steven Chase, "Canadians say trading future lies with Asia; China seen as major partner in 20 years," *Globe and Mail*, 14 September 2006, B4.

⁷ "Advancing Canada's Role in International Support for Democratic Development." Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, July 2007, p. 165.

another selfish national interest. The government should use cases such as Mr. Celil to launch broader diplomatic and programme initiatives on human rights in China.

Promoting rights means abandoning the bilateral human rights dialogue that was begun in 1997 in place of our support of a motion condemning China's human rights record at the United Nations. Canada's bilateral with China became something of a laughing-stock in the international human rights community. In the nine sessions, there was no continuity, no evidence of any progress, and even the Chinese bureaucrats who were hoping to use it to improve their rights records found it useless, according to the report submitted by Charles Burton of Brock University.⁸ In its place, we should create a Canada-centred plan of human rights advocacy and training for China. We should make use of the many excellent NGO groups such as Human Rights in China and Human Rights Watch to devote resources to improving human rights conditions in China – through technology, information gathering and publishing, advocacy, and on-the-ground assistance. Canada's rights community should be the one to help us formulate where and how to press China at the top level every time a Canadian minister meets his Chinese counterpart. Denmark is focused entirely on Tibet in their dialogue. Canada could also choose a focal point: lawyers who defend rights? the media? We should also make sure we integrate this with our activities in the UN Human Rights Council and in other multilateral fora. Again, the focus should be on substantive outcomes not bureaucratic or diplomatic outputs.

Professor Burton has noted that the current parliamentary exchange between our elected democratic parliament and China's appointed rubber-stamp parliament – the Canada-China Legislative Association formed in 1998 – establishes a sort of “moral equivalence” between the two bodies.⁹ We should instead create exchanges between our parliament and those in China who take the idea of a democratic parliament seriously. These would include the handful of delegates to the national, and more numerous delegates to provincial, county, and township congresses who take the bodies seriously. There are also many researchers and activists in official institutions who push for democratization of the congresses.¹⁰

CIDA is a crucial resource for the promotion of human rights and democracy in China. It has done a good job with a limited annual budget for China of \$50 million in recent years. CIDA has important projects on migrant labour rights, agricultural producer groups, and women's rights, for instance. Yet those important civil society projects – which are the ones that CIDA showcases for visiting Canadian parliamentarians and journalists – account for merely *one* percent of its annual outlay in China. The challenge for CIDA in China is to make sure that its initiatives promote not just the accumulation of state power – training judges, helping develop regulatory capacity, or managing cities – but also its *dispersion* to a wider number of citizen groups. We should be training journalists alongside judges, lobbyists alongside legislators. Not all state power is good state power, especially in China. Moreover, there are now excellent opportunities for foreign donors to target their aid to local governments in China that have made the most strides in democratic reforms, paralleling similar approaches to aid that have been pioneered in Africa. CIDA's entire ethos and leadership needs to be deeply and publicly committed to citizen-empowering governance reforms and able to act entrepreneurially to this end. This shift can only come from a top-level and bipartisan commitment of the Canadian government to a change in our relationship with China.

⁸ The full report was never made public.

⁹ House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Subcommittee on International Human Rights, Hearing, 31 October 2006.

¹⁰ For instance, the China Politics and Law University's Constitutionalism Research Institute's People's Congress and Legislatures Research Center (<www.e-cpcs.org>).

Finally, Canada should pursue multilateralism much more aggressively in order to improve democracy in China. Canada played a key role in the development of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of 2001.¹¹ Why are we not doing the same in Asia, despite the recent establishment of groups in Asia like the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats or the World Forum for Democratization in Asia?

At present, Canada does not have an agency that takes direct aim at democratic transitions around the world. My colleague at Queen's University, Tom Axworthy, has proposed the establishment of a new agency called Democracy Canada that would take over democracy-promotion activities from other agencies. It would be independent of the bureaucracy and would answer directly to parliament. This body would have the independence necessary to support real change in China. It could channel funding to groups that the CCP does not choose to receive such support. It could join global efforts to encourage democratic change and political participation in China. The Harper government has issued a positive response to the parliamentary committee report that endorsed this idea and there is hope that some form of agency will be operative within a few years.

Democratic development in China is an area that Canada could really make its own. For example, the UN Democracy Fund established by Kofi Annan in its first full year of operations of 2006 doled out money for 125 projects amounting to \$36 million. *Not one of them* concerned China, which accounts for 60 percent of the people living in undemocratic regimes. How could any business get away with ignoring 60 percent of its customers? The reason of course is political: China stares down such initiatives within the UN. Canada can help overcome this political roadblock and show the world the way. If 1970 marked the abandonment of liberal internationalism in Canadian foreign policy, the establishment of Democracy Canada and its putting China at the centre could mark its resumption.

CONCLUSION

Canada has become complacent and spiritless in its foreign policy, a position we often rationalize to ourselves through appeals to commercial gain and empirically unsound relativism about human rights. We are also hanging by a mere thread as a major power in the world community, increasingly overshadowed by emergent powers like China, South Korea, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, Turkey, and Poland. Breaking out of our self-imposed irrelevance to China will be particularly challenging because Beijing's entire diplomatic and foreign relations establishment is set up to make a serious relationship impossible. Beijing's official Xinhua News Agency has endorsed the warnings of the status quo spokesmen in Canada about the need to keep our relationship on its old course – evidence enough that something is deeply wrong.¹²

There is nothing so easy as going through the motions of our relationship with China. To turn military or parliamentary exchanges into substantive areas, to bypass the state and work directly with society, or to bear the heat of Beijing's denunciations over taking human rights seriously requires effort and attention. Paradoxically, while the Old China Hands constantly advise investing greater time and resources in our relationship with China, the sort of relationship they advance is in fact the easiest and least resource-draining of all – aside from the hangovers acquired from excessive banqueting with senior CCP cadres. What I propose here is a long and hard road, but one consistent with our international aspirations and with the interests of China's people. University of Alberta

¹¹ See the articles in the special issue of *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 10 (3) Spring 2003.

¹² "Canadian Business Leaders, Scholars Criticize Government's Posturing on China," Xinhua News Agency, 21 November 2006.

professor Wenran Jiang's claim that Canada as "lost influence"¹³ in China because of its recent re-think of its ties to China seems to me to be exactly wrong: our loss of influence began in 1970 and has been steadily degraded since then. We have nowhere to go but up.

When we look back upon Canada-China relations a generation from now, what will we conclude? As China emerges from centuries of autocratic rule and its society gains its liberties, what will they think of Canada's role in that process? Thirty-eight years ago our country started off on the wrong foot in its relations with China. There is an opportunity to change that so that a generation from now we can look back with genuine pride on the role our country has played in China's transformation.

¹³ Wenran Jiang, "Sino-Canadian Relations Enter Uncharted Waters," *China Brief* 7 (12) (June 13, 2007). ■

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RESPONDING TO GLOBAL CHINA: GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

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PAUL EVANS*

For Canada, like other countries, getting China policy right is both exceedingly difficult and fundamentally important. Credit Bruce Gilley's *cri de coeur* for injecting energy and ideas into a peculiar Canadian debate that inspires considerable public passion but little serious intellectual exchange. As he notes, the old alignments and assumptions that constituted a durable consensus under earlier Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments are indeed in question in some circles in Ottawa. Less clear is if these prevailing alignments and assumptions should be adjusted rather than replaced.

The political context is a palpable shift in the tone and temperature of the bilateral relationship under the Harper government in a direction that can be described as "cool politics, warm economics." This shift has not been articulated in a major speech or policy statement but rather has been signalled in occasional public statements by the Prime Minister, the known views of some around him, and some incremental policy adjustments related to Taiwan and Tibet. Gilley speaks as an academic with an independent voice. But the general thrust of his ideas resonates with some of the new thinking inside the Conservative government.

The social context is a growing public anxiety about China on a panoply of issues including human rights, democracy, economic competition, product safety, climate change, foreign policy in the developing world, and military modernization. Gilley's primary focus is on human rights and democratization. Whether or not these are the most important issues facing Canada, or China, they are the most salient ones in the minds of many Canadians.

In his attempt to refashion an avowedly "liberal internationalist" approach to China, Gilley takes on the history of the relationship before turning to current policy issues. It may be my *parti pris* as one of the company of *bien pensants* and Old China Hands who has chronicled the evolution of Canadian relations with China and occasionally been at the margins of the policy debate, but I think he is mistaken in his portrayal of the origins of Canadian actions at the time of recognition, the intellectual and political moorings of its evolution over the next 35 years and in several of his prescriptions for a new policy direction.

Gilley's revisionism commits the intellectual error of projecting current values and perspectives onto an earlier era when political leaders and the public viewed China and China policy through a different lens. And he compounds the problem by adhering to a form of values fundamentalism that gives primacy to just one aspect of a complex bilateral relationship. He is asking Canada to walk down a path that no other country is pursuing. Many of his prescriptions would not just harm other Canadian interests but would undermine Canada's impact on the progressive agenda in China that he rightly endorses.

* A response to Bruce Gilley's "Reawakening Canada's China Policy." Paul Evans is Co-CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada on secondment from the University of British Columbia where he is appointed at the Institute of Asian Research and the Liu Institute for Global Issues. The author wishes to thank several readers, many of whom participated in the debate at the Canada-China conference at the China Institute at the University of Alberta on January 20-21, 2008, for their comments.

132 ORIGINS: WHY ENGAGEMENT?

Some of Gilley's strongest comments focus on the origins of the elite consensus on China policy that held reign from the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1970 until very recently. He makes the revisionist case that recognition was "a sorry episode" and that Canada started off on the wrong foot: "[o]ur loss of influence began in 1970 and has been steadily degraded since then."

On the surface of it, this claim is based on the dubious assumption that Canada had any impact whatsoever on the PRC prior to 1970. Save for wheat sales and minor commercial transactions, and the bullets fired at the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army during the Korean War, there was very little contact, diplomatically or at the societal level.

The decision of the Trudeau government to recognize China followed two decades of divisive debate about how to respond to Communist China in parliament, inside the Department of External Affairs, in the press, and in the Canadian public. Between 1949 and 1970 China generated more discussion in parliament than any other country save for the United States.¹

The more significant issue here is what Canadians were debating. A few, including John Blackmore and John Diefenbaker, made a principled case against recognition in moral terms similar to Gilley's, though with an emphasis on China's external behaviour. In the words of Prime Minister Diefenbaker in 1957, his government would not recognize Beijing "until such time as... the Communist Government of China expiates its wrong doing under international law." Recognition, he continued, "would be interpreted as recognition of Communism as such."²

For the vast majority of Canadians the issue at stake was not how to promote human rights and political reform in China. Rather, the immediate issues were the basic diplomatic problems of recognition and China's representation in the United Nations. Inside the Department of External Affairs, the debate hinged principally on international issues related to China's *external* behaviour in the immediate neighbourhood, especially Korea, then Vietnam; how to handle relations with Taiwan; and how to take account of the facts of American policy. Paul Martin Sr. set out the case for "broadening contacts at a variety of levels in an endeavour to penetrate the curtain of ignorance and blunt the edge of ideological differences."³ Lester Pearson's recurrent refrain was to "end the isolation of China which encourages recurring crises."⁴

Whatever his personal thoughts on China, Pierre Trudeau made the case for recognition on the pragmatic grounds that China existed, that it should be brought into the world community, and that this likely would reduce tensions between China and its neighbours and with the United States, and would promote Canadian commercial interests.

It is historical fiction to think that Canadian elites debated China at the time of recognition in the terms that Gilley presents. The recognition of China was about ending the isolation and containment of a rising and restive power. This was not realism in the "Kissingerian" sense of great-power balancing and splitting the Communist world, but it was realism born of the logic of engagement with a middle-power twist. Rather than being a "sorry episode," recognition was in its own terms and context a major success. Is it in question that the Canadian recognition of the

¹ See Paul Evans and Daphne Gottlieb Taras, "Looking (Far) East: Parliament and Canada-China Relations, 1949-1982," in David Taras, ed., *Parliament and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985), p. 67.

² John Diefenbaker, *Hansard*, 1 November 1957, 23-1, p. 654.

³ Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, 63/17, 24 August 1963.

⁴ Quoted in John Holmes, "Canada and China: The Dilemmas of a Middle Power," in A.M. Halpern, ed., *Policies toward China: The Views from Six Continents* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), p. 120.

PRC in 1970 and the parade of other countries, including the United States, which followed suit later in the decade, did not improve the geo-political context? Is it in doubt that Deng Xiaoping's "open door" of 1979 or its entry into the WTO two decades later would have been possible without a more benign international environment for post-Mao modernization?

Several American historiographers have made a case that liberal intellectuals – and here Pierre Trudeau can be included – were either naïve or wilfully ignorant about the reality of the excesses of Chinese Communist rule. Even if Canadian decision makers had more knowledge of the dark happenings in China including the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, as presumably more conservatively minded Americans did a few years later, the case for recognition and the terms of the actual agreement would not have differed at all.

The charge that recognition and subsequent interaction with the Chinese leadership constituted a "heartening embrace of China's communist tyranny" is polemical excess. The charge of "cultural relativism" is more complex. Trudeau did have a generally positive sense of Chinese civilization and was sympathetic to at least the challenges that China's Communist government faced. Few of the mandarins in the policy elite had direct contact with China and only a few delved into the effects that ending diplomatic isolation would have on Chinese political life. None of the architects of recognition made the case that change within China would be automatic or grand. At the same time, virtually no one believed that without an end to the diplomatic isolation could any kind of political or social change advance. And, perhaps reflecting a missionary temperament, the mandarins showed an innate intellectual resistance to using a universalistic yardstick to measure China's progress or predict its future and, further, considerable modesty about the role Canada or any other country could play in shaping that future.

THE CHINA CONSENSUS

By the act of recognition in 1970 and in actions in the four or five years after, especially the visit of 1973, the Trudeau government set the course and tone in the Canadian approach to China that, with one interlude, held sway for 36 years. What had been an intensely partisan debate about China policy before 1970 virtually vanished. The debate was followed by a consensus built on five main pillars.

First, engagement was the best option for Canada, China, and the international community. In the first instance this involved working with the Chinese state.

Second, the tone in the relationship was set at the very highest levels of government led by the Prime Minister and the federal Cabinet. Building relations with China was a priority and at the centre of Canada's activities across the Pacific. This depended upon crafting constructive relationships with Chinese counterparts.

Third, expanded engagement demanded the development of relations and contacts at as many levels as possible. The federal government provided leadership, funding, and imagination in constructing and encouraging a comprehensive relationship. Provincial and municipal governments followed suit, and businesses, educational institutions, and community groups followed in their wake.

Fourth, officials pursued several objectives simultaneously. These initially focused on building bilateral diplomatic ties and deepening commercial connections. They later included the promotion of human rights and good governance within China and cooperation with China on a

range of regional and global issues ranging from building multilateral institutions to humanitarian intervention and global climate change. The art of diplomacy was judging what package would be in play at any particular moment. The challenge was balance and sequencing, not setting an overriding priority.

Fifth, promotion of human rights and good governance were significant parts of the bilateral agenda by the late 1980s. This surfaced in bilateral discussions with Chinese leaders and, as Gilley notes, in the design of the aid program administered by CIDA. Individual consular cases and treatment of individual dissidents were discussed behind closed doors. Democracy and democracy promotion were not part of the official bilateral agenda and were conceived to be the by-products of other reforms and changes in China. Canadian officials did not shy away from talking about their own democratic values and challenges but they did not prescribe them.

The China consensus was never complete. At various times parliamentarians, barbarian citizens (to borrow Gilley's term), business leaders, and the media took issue with aspects of it. The debate about Team Canada in China, for example, pitted human rights activists against a business community intent on commercial interests.

The most serious fissures emerged in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square debacle in June 1989. The Mulroney government imposed limited economic sanctions and halted celebratory events. And it hinted at a new agenda that in 1991 included an appeal by the prime minister for the creation of "a commonwealth of universal democratic values," and a hint that Canadian foreign aid would be increasingly targeted at countries that "show respect for the fundamental rights and individual freedoms of their people. Canada will not subsidize repression and the stifling of democracy."⁵

What is significant is that this rhetoric was not translated into substantive changes in Canadian policy or relationship building. The aid program continued to expand but did include a new emphasis on governance projects. Mr. Mulroney had made an official visit to China in 1986 and made a return visit in 1994 shortly after leaving office.

Rather than being "mercantile, unprincipled and ineffective," as Gilley contends, China policy was largely about opening China to the broader world including international institutions, was based upon clear principles (albeit ones that did not give precedence to the projection of Canadian values), and was a major success. It was popular among the public, a large majority of politicians, and Canada's coterie of foreign policy analysts and Asia scholars. Generally, the Canadian approach was echoed by virtually every other Western government.⁶

GLOBAL CHINA AND RESTIVE CANADA

The high watermark of the approach may have been reached in 1998 when then Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji declared during a Team Canada visit that "Canada is our best friend in the whole world." Probably even more significant was the October 2005 declaration by Paul Martin and Hu Jintao of the "strategic partnership" between the two countries. The term was decided upon hurriedly but captured the enthusiasm for moving the relationship to a higher level that moved

⁵ See his speeches at Stanford University, 29 September 1991; in Harare, 16 October 1991, and at the Chaillot Summit, Paris, 19 November 1991.

⁶ A partial exception, as Gilley notes, was that several countries, including the United States and Japan, constructed legal frameworks for conducting relations with Taiwan at the time that they shifted recognition to the PRC. Canada's approach to Taiwan after 1970 was instead built on evolving practice and understandings, not set in law or treaty. It is open to debate whether this amounted to "shabby treatment" or hampered significantly Canada's ability to sustain functional relations with Taiwan.

well beyond engagement and acknowledged a series of common interests in addressing several bilateral and international issues.

It is clear that we are now dealing with a China that is not only engaged in the international system but altering it in fundamental ways. Economically, it has posted annual growth rates of more than nine percent for 25 consecutive years; it generates some 14 percent of world economic output in purchasing parity terms; it is the largest consumer of commodities including steel, copper, coal, and cement, and is the second biggest consumer of oil; it is the world's third largest trading country; it received over US\$75 billion in FDI in 2007 adding to a total cumulated inward FDI over 20 years in excess of US\$600 billion and also functions as a major source of outward bound FDI; and holds more than US\$1.5 trillion in foreign currency reserves and some \$380 billion in US Treasuries, making it the second largest creditor to the United States.

In the course of a generation, China had emerged as the shop floor of the world by crafting a production system that fuses high-end technology with low-wage, labour-intensive activity, cut-throat domestic competition, a reliable, controlled, and capable industrial workforce, utilization of huge sums of foreign investment and technology, and the new appetites of a billion domestic consumers. It is now the second largest trading partner of both Canada and Mexico and in mid-2007 became the largest exporter to the United States. Canada and China are not just linked by trade in finished goods but by global supply chains and manufacturing that are the material forces behind the new Pacific Gateway initiatives of the federal and provincial governments.

Paralleling its economic capacity, China has become more self-confident, more sophisticated, more assertive and frequently more constructive in international institutions dealing with issues ranging from economics and trade policy to non-proliferation, chemical and biological weapons, missile technology control, exports control, arms control, disarmament issues, pandemics, terrorism, and transnational crime.

Surveys indicate that Canadians are aware of these dramatic changes. China is no longer "out there," it is "here" as a part of daily life for most Canadians. Simultaneously, Canadians are increasingly apprehensive about aspects of the new reality of global China. For many, China is the sharp edge of a globalization that threatens jobs, safety and a way of life. And some are worried about China's defence modernization and foreign policy. What stands out, and may in fact be the distinctive aspect of the Canadian response to global China, is in the area of human rights. The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada poll that Gilley cites does indeed reveal a high level of support for promoting human rights and democracy in Asia and using trade restrictions to accomplish this. But it also revealed that 63 percent of Canadians believe that the human rights situation in China has improved in the past decade.⁷

Gilley is correct that voices from civil society are growing louder and may be having a special impact on the Conservative government's approach. Human rights and democratization have a stronger domestic constituency and are the key frames through which a considerable number of Canadians view foreign relations. And it is apparent that the "values frame" is a factor in the electoral strategies of the major political parties, partly in the competition for the so-called "ethnic vote" in key urban ridings. The Conservative government accordingly talks about the virtues of a "principled" foreign policy.

⁷ "Canadian Views on Asia," survey results available at:
<http://www.asiapacific.ca/analysis/pubs/listing.cfm?ID_Publication=553>.

Ironically, Pierre Trudeau gave Canada a new relationship with China in 1970; his subsequent legacy in the area of rights and freedoms is contributing to new complications in the relationship a generation later.

POLICY FUNDAMENTALS

Gilley calls for a dramatic reorientation of the Canadian approach to China. Some of his diagnosis is persuasive: the Canada-China relationship is immensely more complex and important than in 1970; the situation in China is now far more open and dynamic at the societal level; and the pace of political change is slower than the world wants or China needs.

And I agree with several of his recommendations: that we need more private and independent institutions for connecting with non-governmental actors in China; that our bilateral human rights dialogue on its own is unproductive; that there are major risks in focusing high-level and public attention on individual human rights and consular cases; that there needs to be more room for MPs and Canadian NGOs to have deeper connections with China; and that Canadian business has an opportunity and obligation to advance the discussion of issues that include corporate social responsibility.

In some areas I would extend his logic and go further. It is time to reduce the dependence on government to provide the leadership and funding for creating a more complex set of relations with China. We need to start thinking beyond an aid program and start constructing a mechanism for what can be called “policy partnerships” to address a host of global issues including climate change, infectious diseases, human security in conflict zones such as Darfur and Burma, non-proliferation, and arms control. The road to the solution of almost every global problem runs through Washington, but it now also runs through Beijing.

There are two main problems with Gilley’s argument. The first is the basic premise that Canada or any other country can or should not only work around the Chinese state but actually against it. His call for a shift from a “regime-centered” to a “people-centered” approach is unworkable. We need both, recognizing that the Chinese state is sufficiently sophisticated and strong to stop the kind of interference that Gilley prescribes. The second is that this would not only undercut our pursuit of other interests but would limit or eliminate our capacity to be active inside China.

Gilley admits there will be a cost to pursuing “a more just and consensual state in China,” though he thinks it will be “probably small.” I do not believe that “cool politics, warm economics” is sustainable or that commercial relations can thrive in this context. Whatever the estimated dollar costs, it is important to underscore that the fallout would be multi-dimensional and not easily captured in the rise and fall of trade balances. China and Canada are not just major trading partners, they are becoming more economically integrated than could have been imagined even a decade ago. The Western Canadian transportation system, for example, is being revamped to expedite that integration.

Anything short of a major rupture in bilateral relations would affect only a small number of economic transactions, though there are indeed areas, including major infrastructure projects and the issuance of regulatory favour, such as Approved Destination Status, that would in fact be jeopardized. Even more serious would be opportunity costs seen in reduced access to Chinese leaders, outward bound Chinese FDI, new possibilities in the areas of research and development, and conceivably the major infrastructure projects in Canada related to Canada’s Asia Pacific



gateway initiatives. China has the capacity to influence global industry standards in areas vital to Canada, including energy and environment, wireless technology, and shipping and logistics.

To put this into perspective, no Canadian government would make the case that a severe downturn in political relations with the United States would fail to affect a multiplicity of Canadian interests. China's significance is now such in global and bilateral terms that the consequences may differ slightly in degree but not in kind.

DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Gilley's boldest arguments for a revived liberal internationalist approach focus on democracy and democracy promotion. He asserts that "democratic and rights-respecting states are better for world peace and better for stable and successful development than are autocracies" and that "Canada should be at the forefront of initiatives to accelerate and improve the chances for a democratic transition in China" by respecting "the sovereignty of the Chinese people."

He makes several recommendations, including that Canada should support "rights-defenders and democracy-advocates in China in order to counter-balance the state oppression they now face"; create a new institution along the lines of "Democracy Canada" to "support real change in China," including by "channeling funds to groups that the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] does not choose to receive such support." He suggests that before Canada funds aid projects in places like Tibet or Xinjiang, Tibetan and Uighur groups living *outside* China must give their "open consent." And he advocates working with various regional and international associations concerned with democracy promotion in Asia.

Even discounting the hyperbole, this would amount to an outright assault on Chinese sovereignty and a virtual declaration of ideological war on the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese state. The result would be an open rupture in relations.

More tempting is the option of working in collaboration with other democracies, including in Asia, for promoting democratic values. There have been debates in capitals around the Pacific about whether and how this kind of cooperation can be developed. Since the 1970s, Western governments and democratic governments in Asia have steadfastly resisted creating organizations that could be conceived as advancing the diplomatic or military containment or isolation of China. Indeed, the whole raft of institutions created in the past two decades – APEC, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Plus Three, and the East Asia Summit processes among them – have aimed at an institutional architecture that transcended ideological and political differences between the like-minded and non-like-minded.

Some are now calling for a new approach to institution building based on common values. In some versions, this takes the soft form of a call for consultative processes to facilitate cooperation among existing democracies in Asia and more widely for private and inter-governmental consultations on strengthening democracy within their members. Also under discussion is a harder form: new alliances of democracies, sometimes framed as the Anglo-sphere, intended to promote democracy within the alliance but also beyond. Few Asian governments are on side.

At this stage there is simply not a regional consensus that anything even resembling the Inter-American Democratic Charter is a realistic option. Many Asian countries are hedging their bets about how to respond to the growth of Chinese power, but none of the Asian democracies are supporting new institutions that would work collectively to foster democratic development in their

non-democratic neighbours, China chief among them. They are aware that pressing the common values button, demonizing China, and pushing the more ambitious proposals for democracy promotion, will certainly trigger a strong Chinese response.

What an irony for liberal internationalism if the Canadian path to ending the isolation and containment of China trodden since 1970 led back to the same starting point, now under the banner of democracy promotion. And if Canada took the lead, the isolated party would almost certainly be Canada, not China.

What of the play of forces within China itself, especially on democratic reform? The simmering debate inside China and abroad is largely about timing, sequencing, and the value of outside support. Less controversial is the view that the industrialization and economic growth that has occurred in China since 1979 has compressed into a single generation the agonies and problems that other industrializing countries confronted over a century or longer. Whatever progress has been made in the past two decades, China is a living encyclopedia of modern ills including rampant corruption, social upheaval, growing inequality, labour abuses, unsafe working conditions, dangerous products, unravelling social services, environmental degradation, and spiritual alienation.

To democratic fundamentalists, democracy is a means and an end as well the precondition for dealing successfully with a whole host of internal and external problems. There are others who feel that while democracy is a part of the long-term solution, it is a matter for the longer term. They see that global China seems to be progressing through a sequence that began with economic growth, then moved to an expansion of personal freedoms, and is now entering a period where social justice is the overriding concern of the vast majority of Chinese.

So far as the angels of our better nature and our national values push us to become involved in domestic processes within China – and this is now inevitable and irresistible – it is in the area of social justice, governance, and rule of law where we can play the most constructive role. So far as rights are a principal focus, this may centre less on *ren quan* (human rights) and more on *fa zhi* (the rule of law) and *wei quan* (defending civil rights), including the rights of consumers, migrant labour groups, and private property.

This means dealing with the institutions of the Chinese state in ways similar to what we have been doing for a long while and building upon existing programs. It will also mean deepening connections with the sprouts of civil society in new ways, including the government-operated NGOs (GONGOs) that are part of state-led civil society. But it is false and dangerous to favour a “citizen-centred” over a “regime-centred” approach. There is no choice but to work with the Chinese state on multiple issues as effectively as possible, even as we try to deepen and expand contacts beyond it.

TWO CHEERS FOR THE OLD CONSENSUS

It remains to be seen if Gilley's revisionism will launch a scholarly reassessment of Canada-China relations since 1949 or embolden political elites in Ottawa to formalize a major policy change. His variant of liberal internationalism that emphasizes high moralism and the projection of universal values has its appeals and adherents. But in undiluted form as presented in his essay, it is a recipe for confrontation and failure when applied to China.



With the Olympics only a few months away, international attention is riveted on a China that combines the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful in one rambunctious package. Whatever the best efforts of China's leaders to promote a positive international image, there will be plenty of citizen barbarians at the gate and a few inside it protesting in loud and sometimes creative ways about China's shortcomings, especially in the areas of human rights and democratization.

With the rise of Chinese influence and power we are on the verge of an era in which China may not just aspire to be a responsible stakeholder in the international system but to be a major rule maker. It may be an uncomfortable form of cultural relativism born of new power configurations to argue that our future may be built less on universal values than shared ones. It is to our benefit as well as China's that Canada be a part of the evolution of Chinese thinking on what that new world order will look like.

In this charged context, private institutions and active individuals will develop ideas and push connections to the best of their abilities. But Canadian officials will have a special responsibility to continue to build constructive relations with their counterparts and conduct state-to-state relations with a combination of pragmatism, prudence, and balance.
