



True North in
Canadian public policy

A MANDATE FOR CANADA

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In advance of the 2019 federal election, MLI has released a new series designed to offer practical public policy recommendations for the post-election government. Titled “**A Mandate for Canada**,” this series of short analyses will cover a range of pressing issues that any incoming government will need to address, including Indigenous affairs, foreign and security issues, and economic and fiscal policy.

Remaking Canada’s China strategy: A new direction that puts Canadian interests first

Charles Burton

Introduction

Canada’s relations with China are now in disarray. Following Canada’s decision to detain Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, based on an extradition request by US authorities that is still going through our court system, Beijing proceeded with a highly aggressive response, including the arbitrary “hostage diplomacy” arrests of Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, the “death threat diplomacy” of resentencing alleged drug smuggler Robert Schellenberg from prison to execution, and the use of economic coercion with China banning key Canadian agricultural products (beef, canola, etc.). The diplomatic storm in which both countries now find themselves shows no signs of abating.

Yet, in reflecting on the reasons for the current situation, it becomes apparent that there is a deeper reason for this current nadir in relations – specifically, the fact that Canada’s past foreign policy toward China has arguably been a function of sophisticated manipulation by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its United Front Work Department (UFWD), which has ultimately worked strongly to Canada’s disadvantage. Over the past more than 25 years, Canadian political naiveté and the greed of major Canadian corporations with strong links to senior politicians and civil servants with influence in the Prime Minister’s Office have led to a political dynamic highly favourable to the CCP’s interests in Canada.

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Importantly, this is not a function of partisan politics in Canada, since both Liberals and Conservatives have been susceptible to this form of manipulation. But it does call for whichever Canadian political party that assumes power in the next federal election to undertake the challenging work of remaking Canada–China relations in a way that recognizes the severe shortcomings of where Canada has been with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the urgent need to strengthen Canada’s commitment to Canadian sovereignty and Canada’s proper place in the global community. Simply put, Canada needs a forward-looking, remade China strategy.

China has engaged in a continuous series of actions flouting respect for the state sovereignty of lesser powers and curtailing the autonomy promised to Hong Kong under the “one country, two systems” formula, amid reports of more and more flagrant and shameless abuses of human rights domestically. As a result, the CCP UFWD’s highly effective decades-long program of Canadian élite capture is showing signs of fraying. Canadian public opinion has become more and more skeptical of Canadian government initiatives to enhance engagement with the PRC (Young 2019). China is increasingly perceived as a long-term existential threat to Canadian values and sovereignty.

Ultimately, this calls into question how to reform the criteria for remaking Canada–China relations in ways that will better serve the sustained interests of Canada and our like-minded allies.

China’s Global Role under Xi Jinping

Xi Jinping took on the pre-eminent role of the CCP General Secretary in 2012. Since then, Xi has undertaken bold initiatives to assert world domination as the People’s Republic of China’s long-term goal. This has been buttressed by measures to affirm the PRC’s blatant rejection of the values informing the post-WWII rules-based international order. Honesty and reciprocity in China’s foreign relations, and the national respect and soft power it engenders, have been subordinated to the regime’s more expansive aspirations to global hegemony (Allison 2017). Today, China has little soft power, only money power and the unstable relations that engenders. Contemporary China therefore has no real allies, with its key partners like North Korea and Pakistan being more of an unstable hindrance than help.

Xi’s governance of China has been based on a marked reversion away from Deng Xiaoping’s policies of openness and reform. Xi’s policies combine the Leninist norms that informed the early years of the PRC regime with a state capitalism under the firm direction of China’s Communist Party (Pomfret 2017). Unlike his two post-Deng Xiaoping predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, Xi grew up in the cossetted privilege of the Communist Party élite as the son of Party elder Xi Zhongxun (who joined the revolution in 1928). Developing his own Mao Zedong-like personality cult, Xi has made thoroughgoing changes to centralize state power in his own office and implement policies that strongly benefit the families of China’s Communist élite, including those in the military. The CPP leadership has gradually allowed itself to be less and less restricted by codified law or institutional conventions (BBC News 2017). This has included Xi’s repudiation of term limits to his own function as President of China, which now aligns with his other posts as Party General Secretary and Chairman of the Central Military Commission that do not have term limits (Doubek 2018).

This is in sharp contrast to the promise of the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao periods, which, still being under the firm control of the CPP, held out the promise that Chinese politics was evolving – to strengthen rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, enhance the authority of political institutions, including the National People’s Congress, and devolve political authority to a form of collective leadership more accountable to citizens (Zhao 2011). This included the early 1990 reforms allowing for increasing degrees of democratic election of officials at the lowest levels such as rural villages (Babones 2015).

Liberal elements within China and foreign powers whose citizens were concerned by reports of PRC arbitrary injustice and human rights abuses were defused by CCP promises that China’s developmental goal was to come

into compliance with international norms of governance, democracy, and human rights. The condition attached was deferral of the necessary thoroughgoing institutional transformation until such a time as when China's political, economic, and social development allowed it. But even after the military suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen peaceful democracy demonstrations, the West still had considerable good will when it came to the CPP's political intentions. China's government engaged in a series of bilateral human rights dialogues with Western nations ostensibly to better understand the bases for protection of citizens' entitlements to negative and positive rights in liberal democratic polities (York 2006). China even signed the UN's *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* in 1998. Needless to say, there has been no meaningful progress in preparing China's laws and practices for ratification of these rights in the years since; Western confidence in China's coming into compliance with international governance norms based on the implementation of Chinese citizens' entitlement to universal human rights has now dissipated.

In 2013, the Chinese Communist Party issued a "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere" (Document 9), described as a critique of the "liberal ways of thinking." It calls for stricter control of the media (including Internet censorship) and the purging from educational curricula, including at the post-secondary level, of any reference to "extremely malicious" ideals such as discussion of (Western) constitutional democracy, the concepts of citizenship and civil society, universal values (freedom, democracy, and human rights), neo-liberalism, and freedom of the press ("Western news values"). Promotion of "historical nihilism" undermining the history of the CCP, including lamenting the meaningless persecution and destruction of antiquities in the 1966-76 Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Campaign, previously deemed "ten years of disaster", is now strictly prohibited. No questioning of the "socialist orientation" of the current leadership's policies is permitted (Chinafile 2013).

Many perceive that polarization of wealth and extreme enrichment of the families of the CCP's founding revolutionaries resulting from perversion of the post-Mao "opening and reform" policies have been a betrayal of the fundamental Marxist principles that legitimate the assumption of state power by the CCP. Under Xi Jinping, this leftist denunciation is suppressed even more vigorously than the liberal critique, suggesting that the Party is most concerned about the Chinese contemporary underclass coalescing to repeat the revolution and through direct action demand a return to the norms of the early years of China's worker-peasant-soldier regime's "dictatorship of the proletariat" over the new CCP "bourgeoisie" that assumes power today (Blanchette 2019).

Under Xi, the CCP has reasserted its control over the villages and the judiciary to make crystal clear there will be no evolution to electoral democracy or separation of the powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The Standing Committee of the Party Politburo will continue to rule in secret and be strictly subordinate to Xi Jinping as supreme autocrat (Brown 2018). China has also made efforts to claw back Hong Kong's autonomy with measures like the extradition bill, in violation of Beijing's promise of "one country, two systems" and the Basic Law that enshrines Hong Kong's autonomy. This has generated weeks of protests and a crisis that shows no sign of abating.

At the same time, Beijing has moved to increase its level of social control domestically with its plans for a national social credit system, which through the extensive surveillance of its population's online activities - combined with more traditional measures, such as a massive network of cameras using facial recognition software - would allow the state to apply carrots and sticks to reward what the CCP sees as good behaviour and punish what it

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sees as bad behaviour (Moran 2019). Already, some of these measures have been ruthlessly applied against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang, showing the degree of repressive social control that these new measures can take at the government's discretion (Handley 2019).

Furthermore, Xi has dismissively scorned the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to make a bold and absurd PRC claim over 90 percent of the waters of the South China Sea and built military facilities through massive land reclamation projects over reefs and rock outcroppings in those international waters. Beijing has effectively applied the threat of economic retaliation to induce the Southeast Asian nations most affected to back off. And, given the growth of its military assets in the South China Sea, the People's Liberation Army will likely act as an important deterrent against any attempt to dislodge these "facts on the ground" (SCMP 2019).

Xi Jinping strongly touted the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a massive infrastructure plan to re-orient the economies of Eurasia and Africa to what amounts to a centre-periphery model – one that has Beijing at the centre (China 2015). Most of the industrialized nations including Canada (but not the US and Japan) have contributed generously to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, founded by China as a replacement for the Asian Development Bank and World Bank. Of course, many states did so at Chinese urging (combined with menacing implications for trade and investment if the suggestion is rejected; Aiyar 2015). But the funding for the Belt and Road has been criticized for supporting corrupt dictatorships and in some cases as "debt trap diplomacy," in which the PRC demands long leases on port facilities or other sovereignty-infringing concessions when the Chinese loans fall into default (J.P. 2017).

But BRI fits with what General Secretary Xi has called the "community of the common destiny of mankind" at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017. This formulation corresponds to the Chinese traditional cosmology of *tianxia* (all under heaven), under which China is the Middle Kingdom and all nations are subordinate to China's predominant role. This idea is predicated on the notion of the decline of the United States as a global superpower and the commensurate fading into irrelevance of the post-WWII multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations, NATO, among others (Mardell 2017).

China's political regime and state-dominated economic institutions are highly integrated. As a result, Beijing is able to use economic threats to suppress external political challenges on human rights or China's support for third world rogue dictators from North Korea to Venezuela to the worst of Sub-Saharan Africa.

China makes extensive use of non-tariffs and simply bad faith measures to suppress foreign competition in sectors identified as key developmental priorities. Arbitrary imposition of taxes and fees and new "internal regulations" have forced many Canadian enterprises out of the Chinese market, typically to make way for their Chinese partners then surreptitiously adopting Canadian proprietary technologies transferred to China by Canada (Burton 2015b).

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To achieve strategic superiority in key sectors in support of Chinese global ambitions, China has shown few qualms in using the resources of the military and state to engage in industrial and cyberespionage. In 2014, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper named China as the source of hacking into National Research Council's highly classified aerospace research. Moreover, the PRC uses an assortment of other coercive, covert, and corrupt means to purloin intellectual property and proprietary manufacturing processes to fulfill the technological demands of its five-year plans and other developmental priorities (Burton 2015a).

And conversely, no Chinese electronics can be used securely – this includes electronics from Chinese companies like Huawei, which is another reason why Canada should refrain from allowing the company to be involved in our 5G network. The Chinese state is in no way constrained from demanding through their Chinese Communist Party branch leaderships that any Chinese enterprise comply with demands to serve PRC regime interests through underhanded and illegal means. Such a possibility was even codified in China's 2017 *National Intelligence Law*, which requires companies to cooperate on intelligence matters with the state ("National Intelligence Law" 2017). It is a comprehensive approach that allows national coordination of strategic interests unachievable by liberal democracies.

The PRC is therefore not a trustworthy partner of any nation.

The Past and Present of Canada-China Relations

Canada's current China policy has a strong degree of path dependency with how Canada has related to China over the past century. In the 1960s to the 1980s, many of the key figures of Canada's foreign affairs establishment had been associated with Canadian Christian missionary enterprises in China prior to 1949. This was combined with the general admiration by Pierre Trudeau and the Red Tories of his period for dictators who challenged US liberal democratic political and economic agendas, such as Fidel Castro and especially Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (Burton 2011). So there has been a high degree of Canadian naiveté about the purposes and intentions of China's Communist Party regime, which has persisted into the early years of Justin Trudeau's government.

This paved the way for élite capture by the agents of the UFDW in Canada, with the result of a strong majority view in the uppermost circles of Canadian politics and business that catering to the will of the Communist Party should be Canada's policy toward China.

This rosy view of China relations has been supported by major Canadian business interests who benefit from lucrative interactions with Chinese Communist state commercial networks. Canadian firms and business groups have devoted considerable lobbying resources to engender pro-China influence with senior policy-makers including at the highest levels of the Prime Minister's Office. The primary thrust of this lobbying is that Canada should prioritize the promotion of Canadian prosperity and the interests of Canadian corporations in China. We have been told that it is these interests, as opposed to questions of national security, that should be at the core of Canada's China policy.

This line is echoed by numerous think tanks, public policy schools, and government relations firms that focus on China, many of which tend to be persistent proponents of Canada greatly enhancing its engagement with the PRC on what could be considered to be largely Chinese terms.

So Canada's China policy over the past 25 years has been a trade off between Canada's desire that China reduce non-tariff barriers and open its market to more Canadian trade and investment through a free trade pact or sectoral trade agreements against the PRC regime's many and various demands. This was formally defined under the terms of the Canada-China "comprehensive strategic partnership" when Hu Jintao visited Canada in 2005.

The most recent iteration is that, in exchange for a future promise of better access to the PRC market, Canada should make the following concessions:

1. Allow Chinese state firms unfettered right of acquisition of Canadian mineral and energy companies (Mazereeuw 2015);
2. Remove Canadian restrictions on export of high technology (including with military applications) and allow China's Huawei to install 5G technology into Canada's Bell and Telus networks (Fife and Chase 2017a; Chase and Fife 2017; Blatchford and Blanchfield 2017);
3. Permit the PRC to freely extradite Chinese nationals in Canada who have fallen afoul of the Chinese regime (despite the PRC's pervasive use of torture in interrogation and application of the death penalty for a very broad range of crimes; Russell 2016); and
4. Cease all criticism by the Government of Canada of China's domestic and international policies, take no action against the PRC's co-optation of the Chinese language media in Canada and other espionage and sharp power activities in Canada, and take the initiative to shape public opinion to support better understanding of the critical importance to Canada of enhanced engagement with the PRC (Fife and Chase 2018; Allen, Lawlor, and Graham 2018; O'Neil 2015; Fife and Chase 2017b).

In addition to the promise of considerably enhanced prosperity and economic growth for Canada through PRC trade concessions, there was a rhetoric that implied a *quid pro quo*. If Canada showed "friendship" to the PRC regime by acceding to demands allowing China to further its economic and geostrategic interests in Canada, then China would be amenable to Canadian approaches on social issues such as human rights and would take seriously Canadian concerns over upholding the norms of the rules-based international order (Lu 2018).

However China's very strong retaliatory measures to pressure Canada to release a senior member of the regime - Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou, detained under a US extradition request - has shattered any illusions about any moral obligation the PRC feels in response to Canada's many decades of asymmetrical acts of "friendship." The same can also be said of China's increasingly heavy-handed approach to Hong Kong, where protesters have been labelled as rioters and their actions even described as "near terrorism," raising the spectre of a possible crackdown. With upwards of 300,000 Canadians living in Hong Kong, the possibility that the PRC could directly intervene in the region is not something that Canada can view with equanimity. Canada's endorsement of the 1984 *Sino-British Joint Declaration*, which paved the way for the 1997 handover of the territory back to the PRC, means that we have at the very least a moral obligation to speak out against China's moves to curtail the autonomy of the Special Administrative Region.

It is unlikely that once the Meng matter is resolved by her departure from Canadian soil that Canada-China relations can return to the *status quo ante* of promises of economic benefits to Canada in exchange for Canada's turning a blind eye to China's serious violations of the norms of the rules-based international order.

Future Directions for Canada-China Relations

There are strong vested business and elite interests in Canada hoping that by removing the irritant of Meng Wanzhou's detainment in Canada, the previous dynamic of Canada-China relations that prioritizes the interests of Canadian business with connections to China's Communist elite can be restored. But a growing sense that we need to be more wary of engagement with China - that it can that engagement with China can no longer come at the expense of national security and moreover that the PRC as currently constituted is a long-term, existential threat to Canada. Clearly, we need to realize that Canada's sustained national interest is best served through maintaining the rules-based international order and resisting China's rejection of the norms of international law and reciprocal fairness in trade.

In June 2018, the Parliament of Australia passed its *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act*, including appointment of a National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator to address mounting concerns in Australia over Beijing's campaign of influence and intimidation in that country (Australia 2018). Australia's national response to China's threat to that nation makes a strong argument for a rethink of how Canada can best defend its sovereignty and national interests in the face of a highly asymmetrical relationship with the anti-democratic hostile authoritarian regime that is the PRC today.

To gain support from like-minded middle powers to form a coalition to press China to cease its gross violations of the accepted norms of international relations, Canada has to get its own China policy in order. This would mean:

1. A crackdown on harassing, coercive, corrupt, and covert activities by agents of the Chinese state against anyone, regardless of citizenship, in Canada.
2. Despite the economic cost to Bell and Telus, Canada should reject PRC regime pressure for us to accept the Huawei bid to install 5G technology, no matter how competitively priced it may be, since doing so would endanger the security of Canadian telecommunications.
3. Canada should condemn police excesses in Hong Kong, call for an independent inquiry on their excessive use of force, and clearly state that any PAP (People's Armed Police) crackdown in Hong Kong would carry serious consequences.
4. The government should cease to exempt officials of the People's Republic of China's Communist Party (or officials from Hong Kong) from consideration from the *Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law)*, especially if there is a crackdown in Hong Kong.
5. Canadian government institutions should no longer be complicit in collaborating in United Front Work Department activities such as Parliamentary exchanges attempting to establish a moral equivalence between liberal democratic institutions and the CCP's puppet sham civil institutions.
6. Media and educational institutions that are recipient of PRC regime funding should be transparent about the amounts received and the conditions attached to the funding (the PRC typically requires that such contracts be kept confidential).
7. Canada should unambiguously condemn Chinese human rights abuses and concomitantly support agents of progressive change in China.

Conclusion

In the United States, a consensus has emerged among its political class on the need to actively and comprehensively respond to the PRC's regime aggressive behaviour, whether its flouting of international norms in trade, strategic aggression outside China's borders, or gross violations of Chinese citizens' human rights domestically. To do otherwise would result in far-reaching consequences for the maintenance of world order, especially as China continues its rise to power in the years ahead.

In Canada, however, this consensus has as yet not been fully attained despite the appalling treatment of Canada by the PRC since the detainment of Meng Wanzhou in December 2018. Too many influential members of Canada's business and political elite remain enthralled by China and, perhaps unwittingly, further the interests of the Communist Party regime. By keeping the debate focused on the elusive promise of economic opportunity and favour by the Chinese government and downplaying concerns of Canadian security and sovereignty, they have put Canada at a distinct disadvantage.

It is time for Canada to take the lead in developing China programming that fully embodies the three principles of:

1. protection of Canada's national security;
2. promotion of Canadian prosperity; and
3. projection of Canadian values in Canada's foreign affairs.

The PRC regime and the supporters of China's authoritarian, one-party, state capitalist political economy will surely kick back against any comprehensive assertion of Canada's overall sustained national interest in regulation of Canada's China policy. But the restoration of Canada's national respect through a measured and principled approach to China is ultimately of the greatest sustained benefit to Canada, Canada's like-minded allies, and, indeed, ultimately to China itself.

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"The study by Brian Lee Crowley and Ken Coates is a 'home run'. The analysis by Douglas Bland will make many uncomfortable but it is a wake up call that must be read." former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin on MLI's project on Aboriginal people and the natural resource economy.

Ideas Change the World

Independent and non-partisan, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute is increasingly recognized as the thought leader on national issues in Canada, prodding governments, opinion leaders and the general public to accept nothing but the very best public policy solutions for the challenges Canada faces.

Where You've Seen Us



About the Macdonald-Laurier Institute

What Do We Do?

When you change how people think, you change what they want and how they act. That is why thought leadership is essential in every field. At MLI, we strip away the complexity that makes policy issues unintelligible and present them in a way that leads to action, to better quality policy decisions, to more effective government, and to a more focused pursuit of the national interest of all Canadians. MLI is the only non-partisan, independent national public policy think tank based in Ottawa that focuses on the full range of issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

What Is in a Name?

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute exists not merely to burnish the splendid legacy of two towering figures in Canadian history – Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier – but to renew that legacy. A Tory and a Grit, an English speaker and a French speaker – these two men represent the very best of Canada's fine political tradition. As prime minister, each championed the values that led to Canada assuming her place as one of the world's leading democracies. We will continue to vigorously uphold these values, the cornerstones of our nation.



Working for a Better Canada

Good policy doesn't just happen; it requires good ideas, hard work, and being in the right place at the right time. In other words, it requires MLI. We pride ourselves on independence, and accept no funding from the government for our research. If you value our work and if you believe in the possibility of a better Canada, consider making a tax-deductible donation. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is a registered charity.

Our Issues

The Institute undertakes an impressive program of thought leadership on public policy. Some of the issues we have tackled recently include:

- Aboriginal people and the management of our natural resources;
- Making Canada's justice system more fair and efficient;
- Defending Canada's innovators and creators;
- Controlling government debt at all levels;
- Advancing Canada's interests abroad;
- Ottawa's regulation of foreign investment; and
- How to fix Canadian health care.



True North in
Canadian public policy

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What people are saying about the Macdonald-Laurier Institute

In five short years, the institute has established itself as a steady source of high-quality research and thoughtful policy analysis here in our nation's capital. Inspired by Canada's deep-rooted intellectual tradition of ordered liberty – as exemplified by Macdonald and Laurier – the institute is making unique contributions to federal public policy and discourse. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable anniversary celebration and continued success.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is an important source of fact and opinion for so many, including me. Everything they tackle is accomplished in great depth and furthers the public policy debate in Canada. Happy Anniversary, this is but the beginning.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN

In its mere five years of existence, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, under the erudite Brian Lee Crowley's vibrant leadership, has, through its various publications and public events, forged a reputation for brilliance and originality in areas of vital concern to Canadians: from all aspects of the economy to health care reform, aboriginal affairs, justice, and national security.

BARBARA KAY, NATIONAL POST COLUMNIST

Intelligent and informed debate contributes to a stronger, healthier and more competitive Canadian society. In five short years the Macdonald-Laurier Institute has emerged as a significant and respected voice in the shaping of public policy. On a wide range of issues important to our country's future, Brian Lee Crowley and his team are making a difference.

JOHN MANLEY, CEO COUNCIL
