

Engaging Beijing with Universal Values
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China's 5000+ year old civilization has given much to the world. Domestically, the economic policies launched by Deng Xiaoping after 1978 lifted hundreds of millions of nationals out of grinding poverty. My own longstanding respect for the Chinese people grew during several visits to the country and I was honoured to represent some Canadians of origin in the Middle Kingdom in Parliament for almost 27 years.

Canadians should remain fully engaged with China despite the difficulties created by its governance model. Democracy with very Chinese features is probably closer than many think. How many 'experts' anticipated the Arab Spring? We shouldn't forget in this engagement that the values we represent are both Canadian and universal ones, including human dignity, rule of law, multi-party democracy, corporate social responsibility and the need for access by people everywhere to good jobs.

You have just heard David Matas outline the persecution underway since mid-1999 against China's peaceful Falun Gong community. Organ pillaging is a new crime against humanity and is completely contrary to the traditional values of the Chinese. I'll now attempt to show how Mao Zedong's value system, maintained today by the Communist party, made this continuing barbarism possible.

Jung Chang and Jon Holliday end their biography, *Mao, The Unknown Story*, by stating, "Today (2006), Mao's portrait and corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of the Chinese capital. The current Communist regime declares itself to be Mao's heir and fiercely perpetuates the myth of Mao." Many historians include him with Stalin and Hitler as the three worst mass murderers of the 20th century. Chang-Holliday note, "In all, well over 70 million Chinese perished under Mao's rule in peacetime."



Mao Zedong portrait in Tiananmen Square



Yang Jisheng
author of
Tombstone

“Great Leap Forward”

The worst of Mao’s assaults upon fellow citizens is detailed in Yang Jisheng’s 2008 book, *Tombstone*. It documents the death by starvation of 25-40 million Chinese from 1959-1961. Richard McGregor notes in his own recent book, *The Party: The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers*, that *Tombstone* confirms “what any serious student of world affairs outside of China already knew—that Mao Zedong’s utopian plans to accelerate the establishment of ... ‘true Communism’ ...produced the worst man-made famine in recorded history, a disaster of Holocaust-like dimensions” Disillusioned with the Party over the Tiananmen Square massacre, Yang, a journalist with Xinhua, the party-state news agency, used access granted to Xinhua to locate and publish the truth from party-state archives and to expose denials spread over decades. The Party has banned mention of *Tombstone* in all media.

Mao Practices Continue

Practices of the “Great Helmsman” continue. In 2003, for example, the Party sought to hide the impact of the deadly SARS virus, which began in southern China and spread to its major cities. Only when a surgeon, Jiang Yanyong, sent to foreign media the actual numbers of Beijing residents struck by SARS did it launch quarantine measures.



SARS Epidemic in 2003

Victims of Sanlu Dairy Scandal in 2008



Similar indifference to the public good recurred in 2008 over the Sanlu dairy tainted milk scandal, which caused sickness or death to some 300,000 Chinese babies. Zhao Huibin, a dairy farmer, revealed that quality testers at Sanlu took bribes from farmers and milk dealers in exchange for ‘looking the other way’ on milk adulterated with melamine. Arthur Kroeber of the Beijing-based consultancy Dragonomics, later stated that the Sanlu disaster was rooted in the Party’s continued involvement in pricing control, company management and flow of information, “(It) views control of all three as necessary to its rule....Further scandals are thus inevitable.”

Tibet and Dalai Lama

Another instance of Mao governance tactics persisting is Tibet and the Dalai Lama. In 1959, Mao wrote about the uprising, caused in part by the famine created by his Great Leap Forward. Quoting again from *Mao, The Unknown Story*: “When word spread... that Mao planned to kidnap the... young Dalai Lama, thousands of Tibetans passed in front of his palace, shouting, ‘Chinese get out.’ Mao cabled that the Dalai Lama should be allowed to escape because he feared that his death would inflame world opinion... Once the Dalai Lama had escaped, Mao told his men: ‘Do all you can to hold the enemies in Lhasa...so... we can surround them and wipe them

out’.” An estimated half of all adult Tibetan males were thrown into prison, where they were basically worked to death.

The young Dalai Lama



His Holiness



Today, the Party continues to accuse the Dalai Lama of fomenting violence in Tibet. In fact, as the spiritual leader of Tibetans, an honorary Canadian citizen, and respected world leader, His Holiness is Beijing’s best chance for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet issue. Advocating Tibetan autonomy under Chinese rule, he disavows violence, does not favour secession and last year gave up his political leadership of Tibetans in exile.

Suppression of Dissent- Gao Zhisheng

The party-state still uses overwhelming force to suppress voices advocating dignity for all and the rule of law. One is Gao Zhisheng, a twice Nobel Peace Prize-nominated lawyer. A decade ago, he was named one of China’s top ten lawyers. Party wrath was released, however, when Gao defended Falun Gong practitioners. It began with the removal of his permit to practise law, an attempt on his life, a police attack on his family, and a cessation of any income. It intensified when Gao responded in the nonviolent tradition of Gandhi by launching nationwide hunger strikes calling for equal dignity for all nationals. One of his communiques described more than 50 days of torture in prison. In January 2009, his wife and two children escaped China, obtaining asylum in the U.S.

On New Year’s Day 2012, Gao’s wife wrote him a reassuring letter “...I am no longer afraid of the police....while I was in China, I was often bullied by (them)... which left me paranoid.” She also recalled, “Do you remember what (our son) said ...? ‘I have a red string in my heart, and no matter where (Father) goes, the red string will be tied to him.’ ... Even if you go to the ends of the earth, we will remain connected to you...”



Gao Zhisheng



Liu Xiaobo

Liu Xiaobo

Liu Xiaobo, a prominent intellectual and drafter of Charter 08, on Christmas Day 2009 was sentenced to eleven years in prison for advocating democracy. In 2010, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in absentia.

Trials in China are mere theatres. The deciding 'judges' usually don't even hear evidence given in 'courts'. Canadian Clive Ansley, who practised law in Shanghai for 13 years, explains the fate of Gao, Liu and so many others by observing: "There is a ... saying amongst Chinese lawyers and judges who truly believe in the Rule of Law... (which) illustrates the futility of attempting to 'assist China in improving its legal system' by training judges. It is: 'Those who hear the case do not make the judgment; those who make the judgment have not heard the case'.... Nothing which has transpired in the 'courtroom' has any impact on the 'judgment'."

Religious Persecution

Mao championed 'the death of God'. Churches were banned. After his death, restrictions were loosened. Today, worship is legal at churches controlled by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), such as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) for Protestants. Similar SARA-controlled patriotic organizations exist for Buddhism, Islam and Taoism.

The Party stresses that "religion must have mutual adaptation within socialist society." It defines what 'adaptations' are required and by whom, so religions have to 'modify' their practices to suit the Party's political objectives (Chandler and Pan, 2001). Consequently, the CCPA rejects the Pope's supreme authority, and sham ordinations of bishops are conducted without a papal mandate. The TSPM is so tightly regulated that millions of Protestants have fled to illegal 'House Churches' where they are persecuted.

House church destroyed



Uighur Muslims

Other faith communities are also suppressed. The Winjiang-Uighur region has been the scene of rioting, injuries and death. The large Muslim population considers Xinjiang its homeland. The Hui, in contrast, form a Muslim group which has, until recently been granted more freedoms by the Party than other embattled minorities. They are more assimilated and, at times, have taken the side of authorities on other minority groups, especially the Tibetans. However, Hui in Taoshan clashed earlier recently with authorities who had destroyed their refurbished two-century-old mosque, saying it was an 'illegal structure'.

Freedom of belief or non-belief is essential to any open society. Only those who have lived under totalitarianism can understand the ways of the party-state in China, especially on the matter of religion. The picture is not entirely bleak. Edward Friedman, political science professor at the University of Wisconsin, has studied China for decades and notes, “There is a crisis of faith in a China where ‘money is everything’. The societal response is a religious revival. Buddhism (but not the Lamaist variety) Daoism and Confucianism are flourishing.”

Natural Environment

Three decades of ‘anything goes’ economics have done major harm to the people of China, their natural environment, their neighbours and our shrunken planet as a whole. Consider:

- Nearly half a billion Chinese citizens now lack access to safe drinking water, yet many factories continue to dump waste into surface water with impunity.
- A World Bank study done with China’s environmental agency in 2007 found that pollution was causing 750,000 premature deaths a year.
- Coal now provides about two-thirds of China’s energy and it already burns more of it than Europe, Japan and the U.S. combined. Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from Chinese coal plants are now reaching well beyond China’s borders, yet Beijing has failed to achieve anything substantive concerning the protection of water, air and soil. Many experts conclude that that China cannot go green without political change.

Lake Tai today



Farmer Wu with petitions

Note, for example, the fate of Lake Tai, China’s ancient ‘Land of Rice and Fish’. By 2007, it had turned a fluorescent green because of effluent waste. Two million people lost their main source of water. Local farmer Wu Lihong protested for over a decade that the chemical industry and its friends in the local government were destroying an ecological treasure. He was imprisoned on what was described as an “alchemy of charges that smacked of official retribution.” The larger tragedy, of course, is that Lake Tai is only one instance of what unregulated capitalism since 1978 has done to much of China’s natural environment. Instead of stopping the pollution, the regime punishes whistle-blowers such as Wu.

Public Health

The state of public health in China today is troubling to friends abroad, largely because of the ‘no limits’ and ‘pollute anything’ capitalism. There was no health system for rural people and those not on state payrolls. Under the new privatized model, doctors, hospitals and pharmacies were

made 'profit centres' and expected to finance their activities through patient fees. The current regime is trying unsuccessfully to build a minimal health care safety net. Fortunately life expectancy continues to rise in China, from 62.3 years in 2000 to 74.68 years in 2011.

'Ponzi Capitalism'

Jonathan Manthorpe concluded last year in the Vancouver Sun,

What one is seeing in China is variations of what can only be called a Ponzi scheme. A local government, without a functioning system for raising tax revenue—and... so riddled with corruption...sells development land to garner cash... (first getting) rid of peasants living on the land ...) The land will then be sold to a development company ... owned by the local government. And, this being China, where the remnants of the command economy survive, the municipality has the power to instruct banks to lend the development company the money for the sale. So the local government gets its cash, the municipally-owned company gets to build a speculative residential or industrial complex, and all seems well.

Here's something relevant from the Financial Times recently about the housing bubble in China. In the coastal city of Wenzhou, luxury apartments are to be built for as much as 70,000 Yuan (\$11,000) a square metre, which is about twice the annual income of the average resident. To finance a 150 square metre apartment in the building would consume every penny of a typical resident's income for 350 years.

Need for tangible safety nets

The party-state continues to mistreat large segments of its own population in order to keep down domestic consumption, including the absence of an effective social net. For example, less than a fifth of Chinese workers have pensions; even less are covered by unemployment insurance. Simultaneously since 1998, the government's holdings of foreign-exchange reserves have risen to \$US 3.18 trillion by the end of last year.

Earlier this month around 150 Chinese workers at Foxconn, the world's largest electronics manufacturer, threatened to leap from their factory roof in Wuhan to protest working conditions. One explained, "We were put to work (on a new production line) without any training, and paid piecemeal. The assembly line ran very fast... we all had blisters and the skin on our hands was black. The factory was also really choked with dust and nobody could bear it." In 2010, fourteen Foxconn workers died by throwing themselves from the tops of company buildings...Safety nets were installed in some factories and counsellors were hired to 'help' the workers.

A Way Forward

Universal values must be asserted continuously in dealings with Beijing. Sun Liping, sociology professor at Beijing's Tsinghua University, noted that there were 180,000 "mass incidents" in China in 2010, everything from strikes to riots and demonstrations, twice as many as in 2006. The regime continues to rely on repression and brutality to maintain itself in office.

Canada could seek to replay in China the important role it had in establishing popular democracy in South Africa in the late 1980s. There are lessons in China from the non-violent civic resistance which has occurred in many nations. Each was different in terms of boycotts,

mass protests, strikes and civil disobedience. In all, authoritarian rulers were delegitimized and their sources of support.

When Prime Minister Harper visits China next month, he should make it clear that:

- We stand with the oppressed people of China and seek their peaceable transition to the rule of law and democratic governance,
- There will be zero tolerance in Canada when unfair trade practices are used by China, including theft of intellectual property and the continued refusal to honour commitments made to the World Trade Organization in 2001,
- Canadian investors in China must be protected much better than at present,
- Canada will sell products from the Alberta oil sands to Chinese customers, but is unlikely to sell ownership of any more plants to state-owned companies, and,
- Our border and other customs personnel will seize counterfeit products made in China and seize precursor chemicals used to manufacture cocaine, heroin, Speed and Ecstasy.

Taiwan Election as Mirror for China

Canadians and 23 million Taiwanese share a number of characteristics, including, respect for human dignity, multi-party democracy, rule of law and national self-determination. We can admire the emergence of Taiwan from brutal martial law to a full-fledged democracy. Its prosperity rise is impressive: starting decades ago with a per capita income in the US\$ 150 range, to an estimated US\$ 35, 700 on a purchasing power parity GDP basis (versus \$7,600 in the PRC). Taiwan, along with other familiar countries, is a democratic beacon in Asia- and is what the PRC can, should and I believe will be.



President Ma Ying-jeou



Tsai Ing-wen

The January 14th election in Taiwan marked another step in the advance of democratic governance. Nearly three quarters of those registered voted and the candidates of the two major parties, the incumbent president Ma Ying-jeou (KMT) and challenger Tsai Ing-wen (DPP), both campaigned well and attracted huge rallies, the former being re-elected, but the opposition DPP increased both its voter support and seats in the Legislative Yuan.

On election day and in several preceding ones, 21 of us from eight countries observed the election in several centres. Our preliminary conclusion, which can be accessed from <http://www.taiwanelections.org/2012/01/15/taiwan-elections-2012-mostly-free-but-partly-unfair/> was that the election was “mostly free, but partly unfair.”

I'll only mention some indications of interference from Beijing we learned about:

- making it evident to voters which party it favoured, thankfully not by testing missiles off Taiwan as in the 1996 presidential election,
- Subsidizing by about 50% the flights of an estimated 200,000 Taiwanese business people returning from China to vote,
- reducing the number of tourists visiting Taiwan during the election campaign period (presumably to minimize the number of nationals who observed a peaceful democratic election campaign),
- Sending procurement delegations from China to southern Taiwan in company with KMT officials before the election,
- pressuring business leaders from Taiwan doing business in China to endorse the KMT, and
- creating voter fear about economic uncertainty if the DPP won a major factor favouring Ma and the KMT.

An interesting post-election piece appeared in the New York Times. The party-state news agency, Xinhua, avoided the words "president" and "democracy", presenting the election as a merely local one. A businessman from China who had observed the election noted, "This is an amazing idea, to be able to choose the people who represent you. I think democracy will come to China. It's only a matter of time."

It goes without saying that a democratic China would not be killing Falun Gong citizens in forced labour camps. That it continues to happen is a key indicator of misgovernance today in China.

Thank you.