

COVID-19: A TURNING POINT IN CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS?

Notes for David Kilgour Talk (virtual)
to Polish-Canadian community of Ottawa
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Canada-China official relations are currently near rock bottom. A 2019 pre-pandemic Nanos opinion survey across Canada indicated that nine in ten Canadians held a “negative” or “somewhat negative” impression of the Government of China.



Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor

This is undoubtedly partly due to the ‘hostage diplomacy’ of President Xi Jinping, with the arbitrary arrests of Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who remain more than 500 days later in harsh prison conditions, and the suspension of Canadian canola, soybeans and pork imports. Both acts followed Canada’s arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou under an extradition treaty request by the U.S. Justice Department. Associate Chief Justice Heather Holmes ruled earlier today that the application can proceed, basing the decision on her opinion that the alleged fraudulent conduct, if proven, would be an offence in both Canada and the US.

Canada is part of an increasing chorus of criticism of China's party-state around the world, including such countries as Sweden and Australia which have also had citizens "disappeared" there.

The published highlights from a 2019 Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) academic outreach noted: "Under (Xi's) leadership as well, the Party-state is staging a vehement attack on Western democracy and values.



Street Parade in Hong Kong

The attacks continue. For example, in 1984, the government of China agreed to special status for Hong Kong in the Sino-British Joint Declaration. It promised a "high degree of autonomy," and covenanted that basic human rights would be maintained under "one country, two systems" for 50 years. In recent years, Beijing has systematically violated its commitments. This harms 7.5 million city residents and the financial work of some of them, handling vast amounts of foreign investment/exchange that enters China through Hong Kong in large measure because of its still sound legal system.

Xi Jinping is now pushing for sweeping new laws to tighten his grip over Hong Kong - a move re-igniting fear, anger and protests

about his increasingly totalitarian government. He is swiftly eroding the city's distinctive features, including judicial independence and free speech. In 2003, the Hong Kong government was forced to shelve a national security bill after an estimated half a million persons took to the streets to oppose it. As of today, I understand 356 elected persons and others from 32 countries have signed an international press release about the plight of Hong Kongers. There are today an estimated 300, 000 Canadian citizens living in Hong Kong.



Ai Weiwei

World-renowned Chinese artist and democrat Ai Weiwei's comments in late 2013 remain applicable: "... The Communist Party is ethically and philosophically too weak to meet any challenge in public discussion. Over the coming years, the government will finally realize that they can only continue to govern if supported by the constitution and true rule of law..."

Canadian Clive Ansley, who practised law in Shanghai for 14 years notes: "China does not have a legal system in any meaningful sense. It is a completely bogus system, which was introduced in 1979 for reasons having little or nothing to do with any desire to implement Rule of Law... China is a brutal police state..."

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN CONTEXT OF
ONGOING TRANSPLANT ABUSE

Since 2001, the Beijing party-state has been directing a network of organ-harvesting from prisoners of conscience--primarily Falun Gong practitioners, but also Tibetans, Christians and Uyghurs. Between 1 and 3 million Muslim Uyghurs are currently confined to concentration camps and have all been blood-tested as is necessary for organ transplant purposes.

In mid-2006, David Matas and I, as volunteers, investigated persistent claims of organ trafficking from Falun Gong. We released two reports and a book, *Bloody Harvest*. We concluded that for 41,500 transplants done in the years 2000-2005 in China, the sourcing beyond any doubt was predominately Falun Gong prisoners of conscience.

Ethan Gutmann, author of *The Slaughter* (2014), explains how he arrived at his “best estimate” that organs of 65,000 Falun Gong and “two to four thousand” Uyghurs, Tibetans and house Christians were “harvested” in the 2000- 2008 period.



R. to l: Ethan Gutmann, David Matas, and David K.

Matas, Gutmann and I released an Update on our two books in 2016 (www.endorganpillaging.org). It provided an examination

of the transplant programs of hundreds of hospitals across China, drawing on medical journals, hospital websites, and deleted websites found in archives.

We concluded cautiously that a minimum of 60,000 transplants per year were being performed across China as of mid-2016, not the approximately 10,000 or so the party-state claimed. We provided much evidence about an inhuman state-directed organ harvesting commerce.

COVID-19

At the World Health Assembly (WHA) just held virtually, Taiwan's health officials and journalists were barred despite its clearly demonstrated pandemic expertise that has (with Germany and New Zealand) set an example for the world.

Taiwan learned much from the 2003 SARS epidemic, even instituting a data system to merge citizen international travel records with health information, and widespread infrastructure for general infection testing and tracing.

This year when COVID-19 loomed, President Tsai Ing-wen's government was able to move quickly with almost 100 initiatives, including screening Wuhan flights as early as Dec. 31, banning Wuhan residents on Jan. 23, and barring all visitors from China on Feb. 6. Although both Italy and Taiwan confirmed their first cases in about the same week, by April 7, Italy tragically had about 16,500 deaths, while Taiwan had about 373 confirmed cases and only five fatalities.

In the 21st century, it seems unfathomable that a lack of timely truthful information is costing so many lives. Equally objectionable is the ongoing rejection by the WHO of advice and

expertise about COVID-19 from the democratic nation which contained it much better than most of the 194 WHO member-states.

The Globe and Mail on April 14, 2020 ran an opinion piece by Irwin Cotler and Judith Abitan of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Montreal <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-chinese-communist-partys-culture-of-corruption-and-repression-has/>) Here is part:

“For 40 days, Mr. Xi’s CCP concealed, destroyed, falsified and fabricated information about the rampant spread of COVID-19 through its massive state-sanctioned surveillance and suppression of data; misrepresentation of information; silencing and criminalizing of dissent; and the disappearance of whistle blowers – all of which reflect the breadth of criminality and corruption in the party”.



Dr Ai Fen



Dr. Li Wenliang

“In late December 2019, Dr. Ai Fen, director of the emergency department at the Central Hospital of Wuhan, shared the lab results of a patient suffering from ‘SARS coronavirus’ with

relevant departments in her hospital and with a former medical school classmate; her information was then disseminated in medical circles. For this, she suffered an ‘unprecedented and severe rebuke’ two days later. Dr. Ai also detailed efforts to silence her in a story titled, ‘The one who supplied the whistle,’ published in *China’s People (Renwu)* magazine in March. The article has since been removed – and Dr. Ai has herself recently disappeared...After (she shared the information) eight doctors were arrested, including Dr. Li Wenliang, now regarded by many in China as a ‘hero’ and ‘the awakener.’ Dr. Li died of COVID-19 on Feb. 7, prompting national outrage. The fate of the other seven people remains unknown.”

If the WHO and its 194 member-nations had adapted Taiwan’s practices in confronting COVID-19 in early 2020, many of the 5,618, 146 confirmed cases and 351,146 deaths worldwide to date (May 27) could have been avoided, along with enormous economic hardship for virtually the entire world.

The big influx into Europe was about 260,000 nationals of China, with two-thirds estimated to be working in Italy’s garment industry, who returned to Wuhan for New Year on Jan. 25 and then were somehow allowed to fly back to jobs. As of May 20, there were 228,000 confirmed cases in Italy and 32,486 deaths.

The 27 E.U. nations, Australia and the United States are now demanding an independent investigation of WHO’s complicity with Beijing. China’s Xi is offering \$2 billion to the WHO, hopefully to help nations deal with lost lives and economic calamities caused by his government’s failure to notify the world about the coming pandemic. A number of class action suits for damages against his government appear already to be underway.

German intelligence and many others report that Xi pressured the WHO director general to delay issuing a global warning about COVID-19 in January. Both the CIA and Homeland Security Dept. in the United States concluded that Beijing suppressed the information so it could buy up medical supplies around the world.

HOW CANADA AND OTHER DEMOCRACIES SHOULD DEAL WITH CHINA TODAY?

Those of you with origin in Poland may notice some current similarities with the beginnings of the Cold War, but hopefully we are not entering another such grim period.

There is a great deal of two-way trade, although the pandemic has taught us not to be dependent on China for medicines, PPE, and hopefully manufactured goods generally. A recent UK report indicated that Canada depends on China for 367 types of goods, including medicines, vitamins and food additives. Our trade deficit with China in 2017 was \$44 billion.

‘Contentious co-existence’ was suggested as a likely near-term future by Prof. Nancy Wei of the U.S. in a recent webinar panel of the Universal Peace Federation. In the same panel, a European academic, Prof. Nemen Fasslabend noted the uniqueness of the situation the entire world now finds itself in. He foresees that about a third of previous international trade will disappear; he predicts “permanent competition in the 21st century” between the democracies and China.

Ambassador Chris Hill of the United States stressed in the webinar the importance of good global citizenship and not confusing the ‘China pique’ of the Trump administration with orderly leadership on policy. In the Pacific, for example, America should as a good global citizen support Japan, Indonesia, the

Philippines and Vietnam in keeping international sea lanes open against Beijing indicated intentions to the contrary.

Francis Fukuyama of Stanford U and former board member of the National Endowment for Democracy notes:

“We are not dealing with the China of the 1990s or even the 2000s, but a completely different animal that represents a clear challenge to our democratic values. We need to hold it at bay until some point in the future when it returns to being a more normal authoritarian country, or indeed is on its way to being a liberal country. That will not necessarily eliminate the challenge that China represents; a more liberal China could easily be more nationalistic. But it will nonetheless be easier to deal with in many ways”.

Re-opening the Canadian and other economies from the coronavirus lockdown is going to be perilous, especially with the reality that few nations, including our own, could manage going through a lockdown twice. The federal deficit alone this fiscal year is estimated to be in the \$250-billion range. Canada’s economy lost 1.99 million jobs recently and the unemployment rate would be 17.8 per cent today if adjusted to reflect those unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19.

Re-opening must be done gradually and carefully. It is the duty of all of us to draw many lessons from this calamity and speak up for the dignity of all peoples everywhere across our shrunken planet.

I believe your community has this skillset fully in your hearts and heads to do so.

Thank you for your kind attention- and stay safe!