



Overview

Many participants were pessimistic about the middle to long-term stability of China. Internal events ranging from rural migration, the destitution of state industries, chronic unemployment and rising corruption and crime were identified as factors that would inevitably force change on China. Beijing's authority over the provinces could be the first casualty. In addition, civil unrest and its suppression by the military could become a common occurrence and an unstable economy could become wellspring for a virulent Chinese nationalism.

Some felt that the fear of instability would allow China to hide out the worst of its economy's growing pains. Also the benefits of China's continuing double digit growth are now being felt by average Chinese. Whatever the deficiencies of the existing system, economic and social reform is proceeding at a remarkable pace considering that recently as decade ago China was, of all intents and purposes, a closed society. In other words, the reality of Deng's China should not be underestimated.

On the topic of human rights, participants were generally agreed that trade and human rights are not necessarily in conflict. The trade versus human rights issue was thought to be based on the false dichotomy that Canada had a choice of one over the other. By 2010 China will be Canada's second largest export market. China holds a seat on the security council and is suspicious of multilateral dialogue. On cultural issues Canada is considered a rank cultural outsider if not an intruder in Asia.

Canadian policy on trade and human rights need not be in conflict if Canada matches increased trade with increased pressure on the Chinese government for human rights reform. Canada should have modest policy goals in this area. Canada should publicly denounce new arrests, name the imprisoned and document cases of abuse of the Chinese rule of law. Attention should be given to providing lower levels of government with the opportunity to internally pressure the leadership in Beijing.