

ASSESSING CANADIAN CHINA POLICY: A CONCEPTUAL FIRST CUT

The above discussions of Canadian security interests in Asia Pacific and China's post-Cold War security policy serve to highlight a number of issues and raise some questions. To what extent Canadian initiatives have been successful in the sense that China begins to see security not in traditional terms of force and deterrence, but more toward dialogues, confidence building, transparency? Where does the gap still remain and what specific policy options can be recommended to better engage China in cooperative security and multilateralism and hence advance Canadian foreign policy interests in Asia Pacific? The following paragraphs provide a rough first cut at the conceptual level.

It would certainly be an overstatement to suggest definitively that Canadian initiatives over the years have brought about changes in China's security perceptions, but there is increasing convergence between the two on a number of issues. One noticeable development is that Beijing has gradually overcome its earlier suspicion of the multilateral approach in discussing regional and subregional security issues. This has been demonstrated by its more proactive participation in various multilateral security forums such as the ARF and NEASD (Northeast Asian Security Dialogue) and other channels including the ASEAN + 3, China-ASEAN, where security issues are also discussed.⁵⁵ One still has to determine both the motivations for and the causes of Chinese participation, but the general trend so far seems to be encouraging, compatible with Canadian interests in the region. In the Track II arena, Chinese participation is also steady and on the rise. The Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies' *Dialogue Monitor* project would testify to this new found Chinese interest in multilateralism.

What is most important, though, is that through these various Track I and Track II channels, there are increasing opportunities for the Chinese and Canadians to exchange views and understand each other better on a wide range of issues. To some extent, an epistemic community of experts has been established and its number is growing, at least in terms of moving toward a common understanding of key security concepts and terms so that dialogues are possible, with both knowing what the other is referring to and talking about.⁵⁶ Currently there are multi-channel venues where the two can meet and discuss various security issues, including ARF, APEC at Track I level, CSCAP, the South China Sea Workshop at Track II level, and bilaterally, the CANCHIS (Canada-China Seminar on Asia Pacific Multilateralism and Cooperative Security), which has recently held its third meeting in Beijing. The last is credited with training a new generation of young Chinese diplomats, think tank analysts on key concepts of security, CBMs, and others. Indeed, one of the key objectives of Asia Pacific security dialogues in the 1990s

⁵⁵ Indeed, one indication is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Asian Department has added another division to handle multilateral security dialogue related matters.

⁵⁶ A reflection of this on-going effort can be found in David H. Capie, Paul M. Evans and Akiko Fukushima, *Speaking Asia Pacific Security: A Lexicon of English Terms with Chinese and Japanese Translations and a Note on the Japanese Translation*. (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1998).