

economic change through academic exchanges and linkages between Canadian and Asian non-governmental organizations.

At the same time, it should be recognized that directly supporting such groups and individuals can lead to backlash by the state against both local people and foreign individuals, organizations, and governments. In this light, a climate of trust and a level moral playing field can be enhanced by *not* promoting Canada as a model of communal harmony. Instead, the Canadian experience can be more truthfully presented as one of a multinational, culturally diverse society struggling with similar issues with varying degrees of success, as a society that strives for solutions consistent with democratic principles and values, but recognizes that majoritarian democracy can and do fail minorities, aboriginal peoples, and other vulnerable communities and nationalities.

## **6. RETHINKING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

More recognition needs to be given, both at the policy level as well as in public discourse, to the fact that economic liberalization, electoral democratization, and human rights are not always harmonious 'goods' nor simultaneously achievable. In particular, minorities, aboriginal peoples, and other vulnerable culturally distinct groups often bear a disproportionate share of the costs of economic liberalization and procedural democratization. The fact that economic liberalization and democratization have costs often borne disproportionately by vulnerable communities is rarely acknowledged in the public declarations and policies of governments and multilateral institutions.

Furthermore, the Canadian government must work to institutionalize procedures whereby the agents of economic liberalization—governments, multilateral institutions, and firms—can be held accountable by minority, aboriginal, and other vulnerable groups claiming to be culturally distinct and their advocates.

The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade should more openly address its own conflict-of-interest in this regard, which is built into its dual role as a representative of the interests of business as well as of the human rights concerns of a broad cross-section of the Canadian public.

In some cases, exemplified by the activities of Talisman Energy Inc. in the Sudan, Canadian and other foreign firms can, intentionally or otherwise, become complicit in the state repression of minorities, aboriginal groups, and other vulnerable culturally distinct groups. Across Asia, these groups often live on lands rich in natural resources, a prime target for firms involved in mineral, forestry, energy, and other extractive industries. Canadian firms are particularly active in these economic sectors. Therefore, the Canadian government should be making a special effort to ensure that Canadian firms act in a socially responsible manner. Whether in the minority nationality areas of western China, which the state has recently opened up for foreign investment and trade, or the watersheds of the Three Gorges Dam project in central and eastern China; whether in the oil and gas fields off the strife-torn Indonesian province of Aceh and newly independent East Timor