

The remarks prepared for the Conference:

Liberal Internationalism, Then and Now:

The Foreign Policy of Pierre Trudeau

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I. Pierre Trudeau opened diplomatic relation with China

To begin with, I'd like to recall that diplomats often have a phrase to describe a counter-intuitive – but seemingly successful – foreign policy initiative: “It took Nixon to go to China.” When President Nixon went to China in the spring of 1972, however, he was actually following a trail blazed by a Canadian prime minister – Pierre Trudeau, who had already broken the ice in Beijing.

I learned from a book that Mr. Trudeau, unlike his predecessor, Mr. Pearson, had little experience in the area of foreign policy when he became Canada's 15th prime minister. Quoting his own words, he was ‘neither fascinated by the study of foreign policy nor especially attracted by the practice of it’. Expertise in foreign policy is not a prerequisite for party leaders, but given his record, Mr. Trudeau might have been expected to follow a cautious approach to international affairs. He did not. Instead, Mr. Trudeau pursued a quite independent path in foreign policy.

In his first significant foreign policy speech delivered in May 1968, Mr. Trudeau proposed a series of foreign policy initiative, including diplomatic recognition of China. And he did. In history, Canada was the first Western country to recognize the People's Republic of China. I found that in addition to his wisdom and courage in foreign policy, this may have something to do with his personal experience as well. Pierre Trudeau paid his first visit to China in 1949 when it was in the grip of revolution and second visit in 1960 for a month-long tour he and co-author Jacques Hébert recounted in a book, *Two Innocents in Red China*. The visit in 1960 took place when the country was in the *Great Leap Forward*. He had an interview with Chairman Mao. In their book they wrote that “*it seemed to us imperative that the citizens of our democracy should know more about China*”.

With this in mind, formal diplomatic recognition of Mao's government was Mr.

Trudeau's top foreign policy priority when he became prime minister in 1968. He soon initiated negotiations with China that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations on October 13, 1970. The negotiations opened in Stockholm, and the crux of the negotiations was the status of Taiwan. That issue had been the sticking point in over 14 rounds of negotiations. The Chinese side put enormous pressure on Canada to accept the description of Taiwan as an '*inalienable*' part of China. Finally, Canadians held to the position that we would '*take note of*' the Chinese view. And then Canada and China established resident diplomatic missions in 1971.

Canada was several years ahead of the U.S. in recognizing China. In 1973, Prime Minister Trudeau became the first Canadian Prime Minister to pay his landmark official visit to China, to commemorate the renewal of diplomatic relations between the two countries. This laid the basis for the enormous subsequent growth in Canada-China relations that continued for many years to come.

Mr. Trudeau's record in world affairs must also be judged in the context of the international and domestic environment in which he operated. In the late 1960s, East-West relations were moving to a less hostile phase and accordingly he had the room to extend diplomatic recognition to China. Mr. Trudeau did have practical considerations establishing diplomatic tie with China, he was hoping to secure access to the Chinese market for Canadian business. On a 1973 visit, Trudeau said his primary aim was to discuss trade with the Chinese. But Chinese trade numbers were minuscule compared with Canada's and were likely to remain so as long as the first principle of Chinese economic policy remains that of self-reliance. Mr. Trudeau's requests are not likely in themselves to bring a change to Chinese trading policies. It is fair to state that back to that time, the development of Canadian-Chinese relationship was bound to be a slow and patient process, while its potential for the future is great.

II. What did diplomatic relation with Canada mean to China?

For China, recognition by the U.S. was a big prize. It was an equally big target for President Nixon. But the Chinese always remember how Mr. Trudeau set his own course and significantly supported China to get off its revolutionary track, both internally and externally. Kick-starting diplomacy with China was really an inspired move that helped open China to the West. It was a real turning point and marked an important breakthrough.

Canadian recognition no doubt helped socialize the idea in North America of normalizing relations with Mainland China. Also in the aftermath of Canadian recognition, the floodgates opened and many other countries, from Australia to Japan to Germany and beyond, moved to recognize the PRC using the "Canadian formula" with respect to the mainland's claims to Taiwan.

Furthermore, the diplomatic relations between Canada and China contributed to the closer integration of China into the international world order. Not only did the diplomatic opening with Canada enable their other relationships to expand, it helped break the logjam in the UN on the vote to award China the seat occupied by the nationalists in Taipei. In October, 1971, the Chinese were voted in. The remarkable economic growth story that began with Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. Canada-China relations, like those of many other countries' relations with China, enjoyed steady growth in the ensuing years, interrupted briefly in 1989-90 by the events in Tiananmen Square, but accelerating again after China joined the WTO in 2001.

Therefore, it is easy to understand that Pierre Trudeau became officially "a great friend of China." His far-reaching initiative led to several decades' of flourishing Canada-China relations based on this early friendship and goodwill.

For Pierre Trudeau himself, the first great diplomatic initiative was a defining act of his career. He paid a visit to China in 1983 again. He was interested in what made the country work and was prepared to listen. Mr. Trudeau's interest in China continued long even after his time in office. He and his three sons visited China in 1990. Mr. Trudeau's affection for China was great enough that, as Prime Minister, he tried to organize a canoe trip down the Yangtze, although China wouldn't allow it.

III. Trudeau's foreign policy approach to China and its legacy for current China-Canada relationship

Mr. Trudeau ever launched a review of Canadian foreign policy to find ways to serve Canada's interests, objectives, and priorities more efficiently. The results of review, published in 1970, were labelled by Prof. Peyton Lyon as the *Trudeau Doctrine*. The review identified six main themes that reflected Mr. Trudeau's concern that foreign policy should serve both domestic interests and universal principles: economic growth, sovereignty and independence, peace and security, social justice, quality of life, and a harmonious natural environment. These are still what we should be concerned nowadays in formulating foreign policy and therefore Trudeau legacy remains with us.

Regarding China, Mr. Trudeau's approach can be summarized as *curious, open-minded and rooted in a desire to understand the country and not allowing much politics to color Canada-China relations*. He took politics out of economic and trade relations. This is a very positive stance toward China which won Mr. Trudeau favor in China, but some criticism at home.

How much should the foreign policy towards China by Pierre Trudeau inform Justin Trudeau today? We see that both China and Canada are much changed, after all, and the thrill of new diplomacy five decades ago has given way to complex trade and

consular matters in an \$85-billion relationship. When Justin Trudeau paid his own first visit to China as Prime Minister, shadows of his father were still there. China saw in him a chance to revive the collegiality they once enjoyed. Justin seems to know the value of the legacy asset left to him by his father's diplomatic breakthrough — China's coming-of-age moment in international affairs. He's also proud to align himself with his father's approach to world affairs — that Canada is a global actor that needs important relationships in every part of the world. He knows such relationships enhance Canada's credibility on the global stage.

Justin Trudeau may be able to profit from the goodwill that has lingered long after his father left office, but he doesn't aim to be a replica of his father. He's a different person and does not always follow the footsteps of his father. Though he realized that a strong relationship with China is essential to creating jobs, strengthening the middle class, and growing the Canadian economy, he is also cautious about deepening its trading relationship with China. In fact, Canada-China relationship is now a smoking rubble. China's tech giant, Huawei's CFO, Meng Wanzhou's arrest on the extradition request by the U.S. Department of Justice has caused Canada-China relations to plummet to a point without precedent since Pierre Trudeau opened diplomatic relations with Beijing in October 1970.

Recognizing China is a country with great geopolitical and human relevance for Canada, two countries need a stronger relationship. A more practical approach to China should build on the complementarity of the two countries' economies, while supporting Canadian democratic values. Remember our task today is not to establish friendship and trust. Pierre Trudeau and his generation already did it over five decades ago. Instead, our task is to fully integrate his friendship and trust into our meaningful cooperation in bringing people in two countries a brighter future.