

Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration, and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper. By Paul Evans. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 144 pp. \$31.50 (cloth); \$11.97 (paper); \$11.95 (e-book).

This book is aptly described on its cover as a “must read” for those concerned about the future of Canada’s relations with China. Unfortunately, it is highly likely that despite its eminent readability—it is short and exceptionally well written—it will remain unread by those very Canadians who will shape the broad patterns of the country’s relationship with China over the next few years: the political elites in the Conservative Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party of Canada. For if their recent policies and pronouncements are any indication, the governing Conservatives under Stephen Harper, the NDP Official Opposition under Thomas Mulcair, and the third-place Liberals under Justin Trudeau are not likely to think seriously about China and the challenges that an emerging China poses for Canada in the years ahead.

For its part, the Harper government has demonstrated over its nine years in office that its policies are not guided by any clear strategic approach to China. The Conservatives came to power in 2006 with a highly negative view of China and a deep antipathy toward its system of government. Evans confesses how jarring it was for him as co-CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada to hear two new Conservative cabinet ministers refer to China as a “godless totalitarian” country (p. xiv). Prime Minister Harper famously promised not to sell out Canada’s principles on the advancement of human rights in China “to the almighty dollar” (p. 63), pointedly accorded the Dalai Lama honorary Canadian citizenship and welcomed him to Ottawa, and equally pointedly refused to travel to Beijing to participate in the celebration of China’s first Olympic Games in 2008.

But this “cool politics” was not to last: faced with increasing criticism by Canada’s corporate community, and by Canadians of Chinese origin none too impressed by the Harper government’s unsophisticated approach to China, the prime minister pulled an about-face and rapidly improved relations. By the summer of 2011, the new minister of foreign affairs, John Baird, was enthusing about China as “an important ally,” and by February 2012, the prime minister and his wife were cuddling pandas that were being offered to Canada by Beijing. As Evans notes, it was a “remarkable policy reversal,” but one that was never explained by anyone in the Harper government (p. 74).

But this reversal didn't hold either. By the end of 2012, the Harper government had to deal with a proposal by China National Offshore Oil Corporation to take over Calgary-based Nexen, Inc. The proposed sale prompted a backlash within the government's own ranks: cabinet ministers and backbenchers alike expressed concern about the sale—reflecting a larger public concern among Canadians about Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs). While the Harper government eventually approved the Nexen sale, it also adopted new opaque rules on Chinese SOE investment in Canada that had the not-surprising effect of drying up Chinese investment, which dropped from \$21.5 billion in 2012 to just \$220 million in 2013. And so Harper changed course again, championing a new economics-focused approach to China that culminated in a successful and warm visit to China in November 2014.

But, judging by their policy pronouncements, the major opposition parties in Canada would not offer anything different. The NDP, the Official Opposition in the Forty-First Parliament (2011–2015), has long had a one-note China policy, and that one unwavering note has been human rights to the exclusion of all other aspects of policy. The Liberals under Justin Trudeau have not articulated a China policy, apart from Trudeau's rash remark in November 2013 that he had admired China because "their basic dictatorship is actually allowing them to turn their economy around on a dime."

In sum, none of the three major political parties in Ottawa has a clear approach to China that is informed by strategic considerations. Rather, parochial electoral gamesmanship appears to be the prime driver of policy on China, on the part of both the government and the opposition.

Evans bemoans this lack of strategic thought, contrasting it with the approach of previous governments in Ottawa. *Engaging China* provides an excellent short history of Canadian policy toward China, beginning with the decision taken by the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau's father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, in May 1968, to negotiate recognition of the People's Republic of China, a historic recognition announced in October 1970. During their negotiations, the Canadians had stumbled on a formula for dealing with the thorny problem of the status of Taiwan, and that formula was used by a large number of other countries, including the United States, to end Beijing's diplomatic isolation.

Evans shows that there was a fundamental similarity between the approaches of the Liberals under Trudeau in the 1970s, under the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney in the

1980s, under the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien in the 1990s, and Chrétien's successor, Paul Martin, in the mid-2000s. The key similarity, he argues, was the idea of engagement, which each prime minister prior to 2006 embraced in their own particular way.

Evans concludes with a carefully crafted argument about the importance of engagement as a policy approach to China. He argues that “engagement with twenty-first century characteristics” would mean abandoning the simplicities of the last eight years in favor of seeking common ground as the patterns of global politics evolve. Evans, one of Canada's most senior and experienced China scholars, offers a coherent framework for the future of the relationship with China. Those who shape foreign policy in all three political parties in Ottawa should read this little book—and learn from it.

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Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China.

By Leta Hong Fincher. London: Zed Books, 2014. 224 pp. \$24.95 (paper).

In *Leftover Women*, Leta Hong Fincher, a former *New York Times* journalist who recently received her PhD in sociology from Tsinghua University in Beijing, probes into the intricate relations between “leftover” women, China's booming urban real estate market, and gender inequality. The leftover women, a derogatory term recently coined in China, refers to “an urban, professional female in her late twenties or older who is still single” (p. 2). Drawing upon analysis of news reports and extensive data she collected through Internet surveys and in-depth interviews, Fincher cogently argues that the leftover women discourse is led by a state-sponsored media campaign and this discourse has resulted in many urban, professional women hurrying into marriage without the security of property rights and legal protection. For Fincher, the lives and choices of these leftover women are “part of a broader resurgence of gender inequality in post-socialist China, particularly over the past decade and a half of market reforms” (pp. 3–4).

Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of how single, professional women are stigmatized as leftover by “state media news reports, sur-