A conversation on Canada-Asia relations

On 30 March 2009, the president and CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Yuen Pau Woo, met with four distinguished Canadians for a conversation on Canada-Asia relations. The panel consisted of the Honourable Jack Austin, retired senator and president of the Canada China Business Council (1993-2000); Donald Campbell, former ambassador to Japan (1993-97) and deputy minister of foreign affairs and international trade (1997-2000); the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Canada's 16th prime minister; and Wendy Dobson, director of the Institute for International Business at the University of Toronto and former associate deputy minister of finance. Also present were Jill Price, executive director of the Asia Pacific Foundation and Ryan Touhey, co-guest editor of this issue of International Journal.

Woo: Thank you for agreeing to be part of this distinguished panel. I'd like to hear your reflections on Canada-Asia relations in the last 25 years, as well as your views on the current situation and the challenges that lie ahead. Let me begin with a broad-brush question: how would you characterize the Canada-Asia relationship in the last quarter century?

Dobson: When we talk about the last 25 years, there's been some activity, but one of the remarkable features in Canada is the absence of continued high-level discussion about our relationship with Asia.

Campbell: The role of government has not been coherent or strategic. The role of business has been spotty and unsustained. The role of media has been zero. The role of academia has been specialized. The role of civil society has

not been sustained either. That's one of the biggest issues we have with Canada and Asia.

Clark: There's a reason for that. A similar situation applied to Latin America, Africa and other parts of the world where "old Canada" didn't come from. The exception has been Europe where there is a plethora of connections that loomed very large in our actual behaviour and in our historic memory. Those natural connections multiplied and intensified in the Canada-US relationship but that wasn't the case in any dominant way in Latin America. It was the case in sporadic ways and on occasional issues in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. That's the larger condemnation of the reach of Canadian foreign policy.

Woo: And yet, we've always described ourselves as a country bounded by the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans. Our motto after all is *"a mari usque ad mare"*—from sea to sea.

Austin: I don't put much weight on an imagery created in an imperial tradition where the British empire circled the world and the sun shone somewhere on the British empire all the time. The Canadian image of the Pacific Ocean was as a boundary, not a pathway.

I agree with Don's summary of Canadian attitudes. If you go back historically and look at Canada's view of Asia, it was to dismiss the region, at least in comparison with the Euro-American world. Canada sent a few missionaries over there. In their view, Asians weren't really civilized and had a corrupt economy. Canada's focus was on domestic nation-building, and its relationship with the US and the British empire. Asia was of no consequence. Our problem today is "how do we change the paradigm totally?" Now Canadians are not negative about Asia; they're just not aware of their own self-interest in terms of what's going on in Asia.

Campbell: I offer a different take on the idea of "sea to sea." Along with other Canadians, I saw building the railroad to British Columbia as nation-building. It's interesting that the then-chairman of Canadian Pacific Railway was not at the ceremony of the last spike that has been immortalized in photographs. Instead he was off in London buying ships to the "Orient." The posts of the CPR at that time indicate that the company and people in business saw the railway as the "road to the Orient" and not as a trans-Canada project as such. It was the original Pacific gateway.

"Sea to sea" was a trade route, but there was no interest in developing trade relations other than trade in silk, tea, and commodities. The opium wars, the occupation of Beijing, the seizure and creation of colonies all illustrate the attitudes of Europeans and even Americans. It wasn't a period where we, as part of the Euro-American world, thought of Asia as equals or as potential customers of value.

Woo: I want to bring us back to the contemporary period and ask you about the suggestion that we have neglected Asia. It's commonly said that the neglect of Asia has to do with our excessive focus on the United States. What do you make of this thesis?

Dobson: The question is whether we have been excessively focused on the US. My short answer would be no. In contrast, for far too long we've been too focused on Europe. Asia began assuming more importance because of the rise of Japan. What I find most troubling is that while we did respond to the rise of Japan, we have not been able to get our arms or heads around the fact that Asians are now focused on a historic integration project. They are increasingly thinking strategically about relationships within the region, amongst the giants in Asia, and relationships with the rest of the world. At the centre of that are China and the United States.

My view is that for the foreseeable future, as it has been in the past, the United States should be central to our focus. We should be looking at the rest of the world partly through a prism, a US-reality prism, and thinking far more strategically about our relationships, particularly in Asia, because of what's now unfolding in the region. With the questions about the US economic future raised by the serious recession that we are currently experiencing, Canada may find that it delayed diversification for too long.

Campbell: Certainly in the 1980s and early 1990s, from an economic and trade perspective, the negotiations of the US-Canada trade agreement, subsequently NAFTA, occupied a huge majority of our time. That's certainly rubbed off on the business community. It's fair to say that in the business community, in particular amongst small to medium-sized businesses, there was an inevitable north-south focus with less focus on Asian trading opportunities.

Clark: There's not a strong natural constituency for Canadian foreign policy. There are experts, and able diplomats, and a significant "informed public,"

but none of them has the public weight to drive significant changes in foreign policy. Our interests are not strong enough to mobilize a government, as is the case, for example in the United States with busines lobbies, or the Cuba lobby, or threatened consumer boycotts. That raises two points. One is the immense importance of people who take a lead on these things. Usually, when a lead has been taken on Asian matters in Canada, it has been business driven—or initiated by the government, "top down," not "bottom up." It would be worth having some sense as to where those pressures for change came from, which sectors, what regions. My sense is that, with Asia, it has been disproportionately regional and largely a British Columbia phenomenon. Secondly, when Canada was able to take successful initiatives, there was a normally passive constituency able to be awakened by whatever elite led the initiative. One way to look at the original free trade agreement with the United States is that we couldn't have done it with any other country. There wouldn't have been the same popular support and economic support for that to happen with any other country.

With respect to Asia, how large a natural constituency exists in Canada? We all know the population and demographic figures, but what do they mean in terms of real attitudes? Chris Sands did an interesting piece for the Center for Strategic and International Studies on the strength of the Canada-US diplomatic relationship during the 50s, noting that key people in the US State Department had all fought in the same wars as their Canadian diplomatic counterparts, all gone to the same schools, all fished in the same Canadian lakes. So far beyond the formal structure of cooperation, there was a significant level of socialization. How easy would a similar phenomenon be with Asia? How easy was it in the 1950s? In the 1980s? How easy will it be now? Those are fundamental questions because you don't turn the direction of a country on a dime. To some degree, there has to be a willingness in the country at large to go where you want policy to take you.

In my case in 1984, when I became secretary of state for external affairs, there is no doubt that the driving force on our orientation to Asia came from the department. It didn't come from my political party because it was never an election issue, nor did it come from the business community or its various representations to any significant degree.

Woo: Jack, do you agree with the statement that there's no natural constituency for an Asia focus within the Canadian populace?

Austin: There is a constituency, but it doesn't see itself as entitled to a voice yet. That, of course, is the Asian-Canadian community. What I want to pick up on is something that both Don and Joe said: "We have had leadership from individuals, not from constituencies."

If I move to the Liberal period, Trudeau's interest in Asia, particularly with China, came from his own nature and experience, not from requests of his constituency. He went there with a global sense of Asia—he pushed for the exchange of recognition. He went there in 1973 as the first Canadian prime minister to visit. Similarly, Chrétien was particularly interested in China, but also more broadly in Asia, for his own reasons, not because he had a big constituency. Why? It came from an awareness of the Bombardiers, the SNC Lavalins, and other businesses in Québec with which he was familiar politically. He knew something was happening in Asia that was important. It didn't come from a big constituency. Paul Martin had his own business experience in Asia because his Canadian ships were very active in the region. Recognizing that transportation was being revolutionized in Asia, Paul Martin understood the importance of Asia. Liberal interests in Asia were driven by the experience of the prime ministers, not entirely, but mainly by their pre-political experience. And as Joe said, they took leadership without constituencies of any great interest pushing them.

Remember also that Brian Mulroney had an interest similar to Chrétien's. He was built into Québec business and had a global business outlook. In 1986, he led the first business delegation to go with a prime minister. Moreover, in recent times, Premier Campbell of British Columbia has taken a lot of initiatives on China. The point is well made that there is not a constituency yet, but there are individuals in important places who have taken initiatives.

Dobson: An important point that Jack brings out is that the Asian-Canadian community doesn't feel entitled to a voice. Can you just tell us a little more about why you use those words? I tell you why I ask. I keep asking my students: why is it that in Canada half our immigrants come from Asia, yet the Canadian electorate is inward looking? Why are they not more outward-looking and ambitious for Canada's role in the world? The answer is not that they don't feel entitled; it's that they're too busy opening the doors for their kids. They have their heads down making a living and getting their kids into higher education. Is that what you mean, Jack?

Austin: What you say, Wendy, is certainly the attitude of individuals, but what are those attitudes based on? It's based on a huge dichotomy in Asian culture between political power and business. In the Asian experience, the closer you are to power, the closer you get to a fire that will burn you if you are not careful. Power is very risky stuff. Security is an enormous priority for many Asians. And so I find the Asian community in transition. Their children are much closer to the western value systems, but still in a bridging place.

It's so important to Canada's interests in Asia that we harness, in our collective interests as Canadians, a community with their expertise, insights, and capacity for bridging relationships and networking on behalf of Canada as a whole. We have to pay an awful lot of attention to the Asian-Canadian community in this country. This is a critical factor in mobilizing those communities for Canadian interests in that region.

Woo: Joe, after 20 years of immigration, with Asian immigrants being the majority source and with second- and third-generation Canadians now taking their place in mainstream society, are we beginning to see a constituency, a driving force for policy towards Asia?

Clark: I think Jack's absolutely right. The preoccupation of many Asian Canadians is with their own security, their family security, the quality of education for their kids, all these natural human and family priorities. The interesting question is: after their work hours have been consumed by those things, what causes them to be as little engaged in the larger society as they are? Is it fear? Are they keeping their heads down because of the knowledge of our sometimes intolerant history? If that is the case, what do we do about that? What's interesting is that participation in our public institutions does not yet correspond proportionately to the share of the Asian-Canadian population in our country. Why is that?

I offer two personal stories to illustrate the complexities of Asian-Canadian integration in the past. I represented a town in Alberta called Drayton Valley, one of whose industries was lumber. Lumber that was to be exported to Japan required pre-certification by the Japanese. Japanese managers came over to live in Drayton Valley and to play a decisive role in the day-to-day operations of a significant employer. The town fathers were a little worried about the public reaction to having four Japanese managers evidently determining the future of a local industry. But the people of Drayton Valley

"got it" right away and there was no controversy. As I look back, it is not unrelated to the fact that a Japanese-Canadian dentist was practicing successfully in the community and had done so for many years. So the concerns that might have been seen at a distance as being cultural or racial were diminished.

In another example, to get elected in Calgary Centre in the 2000 general election, I had to win a substantial Chinese-Canadian vote. I was doing badly when the campaign started because the leader of a "fifth party" had no power and wasn't going to have any power. But a wise advisor suggested that there would be a great deal of respect for a former prime minister in that community. This is what we then began to promote. Interestingly, it was older Chinese-Canadians who began the process of voting for the "honour" of being represented by a former prime minister.

My point is that integration of Asian Canadians into a society whose roots are European is more complicated than we may have assumed. Second, the reasons for participating in the political process may well be very different for some of those prominent communities. As we look at the impact of the diaspora on the future, we need to understand how these significant changes in our population and culture create a view of the world that is profoundly different from the Eurocentric view that was held 20 to 30 years ago.

Woo: Don, there's a story emerging here, particularly from Joe and Jack, that there really is no groundswell of support or push for strong relations with Asia. It comes from the predilections, experiences, motivations of individuals, and in particular, prime ministers. In your view, was the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in a position to put Asia on the map when MPs weren't interested, when the general public was apathetic?

Campbell: In general it's been a challenge. First of all, if you look historically at the department, there's always been what I would call an Asian constituency. It's interesting the number of missionaries in China and Japan who joined the department, starting with Chester Ronning, and a fairly extensive number of people since that time. There's always been a cognizance of two constituencies in the department—one Euro-focused, one Asia-focused.

To that extent, there's certainly been a stronger interest in the department than there has been in the political, business, or civil society arena. If you look at the Canadian business community, the Canada-Japan

case is telling. There is a myth about Canada's exports to Japan as a success story of Canadian companies. When you look at the composition of Canadian exports to Japan over that period, it really was Japanese interests creating companies and buying things in Canada. With some notable exceptions, it was generally not Canadian businessmen going to Japan. It was really the Japanese in Canada with big trading companies focused on industries such as natural resources, agricultural products, metals, and minerals.

If I zoom right up to 2009, the role of the trading company in Japan has undergone significant transformation because they're doing much less of that trade. Japan has evolved in a different manner and those companies are becoming investment vehicles. The nature of Japanese investments is also changing. All of which is to say that you haven't really had a significant or a sustained business community constituency looking at Japan. We've lost some of the institutional underpinnings. Moreover, if you look at some companies, such as Alcan, that were previously prominent in that business community, they are no longer Canadian-owned. There are notable exceptions, such as Manulife, but in general there isn't a focus on Japan in Canada today.

Clark: I am interested in why major Québec-based companies would have taken what seems like an unusual interest in Asia? Was it a diversion to somewhere else? What was it?

Austin: You know, that's an awfully good question. I think basically the Bombardiers, the SNCs, the Power Corporations, and the Alcans based in Québec came to see themselves as global players earlier than others in the Canadian business community who were focused across the Atlantic or down to the United States. It may be that they had a more internationalist approach because the European business culture, which they were closer to, was very outward-going as traders and investors. Take Paul Demarais senior, a Franco-Ontarian, who merged himself into the Québec business culture, but developed along the way a holistic view of the role of government and business quite different from the dichotomous view of the English-Canadian business community.

We all know this story of Canadian business community leaders who, in their friendly discussions with Chinese business people, had highly negative things to say about the Canadian government. After receiving no follow-up from the Chinese side, they would inquire of the Chinese ambassador, who

would say, "Well, frankly, the Chinese could never do business with a private company that couldn't get along with its own government." This illustrates a different business culture that did not exist with Québec business people, who had a more holistic view of their relationship with the Québec government. They worked with the political leadership of the province, not in opposition to the government as in Ontario and in western Canada.

Let me give you another illustration. In Team Canada '94, there was only one premier who did not come as part of the mission. That was Lucien Bouchard. He received heavy criticism from the Québec business community, which took part in large numbers. Bouchard got the message and took part in the next mission, two years later.

Woo: Wendy, you travel to Asia often and engage frequently with leading thinkers and players in Asia. Can you comment on the way in which views of Asians toward Canada have changed in the last 25 years?

Dobson: What I've found in surveys is a perception that Canadians come and go both in business and policy. As a result, Asians don't take us seriously because we don't give any signal of Asia as an enduring focus of our foreign policy. This impression suffers, too, from comparisons with Australia, where for the past 25 years Asia has been a central pillar of its foreign policy. The quality of information and analysis that comes out of Australia in partnership with Asians is just light-years beyond what we have in Canada.

The view of Asian thinkers and policymakers is that it is nice if you turn up, but it's so unpredictable that your presence doesn't matter anymore. And the message is "an opportunity missed."

Campbell: Australia has been very adept at defining who it is and it has firmly defined itself as an Asian country in a way that Canada couldn't for a set of geographic and other reasons. Every single aspect of Australia's foreign policy with Asia is very well defined. It's not always successful but they now have a measure of engagement. When you compare us 25 years ago to today, they've made enough strides whereas we've been left literally in the dust. While I was in Japan, the entire Australian cabinet came to Tokyo to meet with the Japanese cabinet; that was the kind of commitment that you got from the Australian business community, from the government, and from society at large.

Dobson: Yes, and they have also built a cadre of experts in policy, academia, and business. They have invested in their universities, particularly the Australian National University, and so their academics are a key hub in getting Asians who are working on integration.

Austin: There are so many ways the Australians have shown us up for pygmies in terms of presence and networks in Asia. Their attraction and openness to students has created tremendous goodwill throughout Asia. Their prime minister speaks Mandarin and is described by the Chinese as an "old friend."

Dobson: But it isn't just Australia and China. It's Australia and the integration of the region. Where Australia is going now is into India as well. They're playing in encouraging Indians to realize and better articulate their role in the world. They're also helping to tie India into Asian institutions partly as a counterbalance to China.

Woo: Let's talk about India and the troubled history of Canada-India relations. Why has it taken so long for us to approach some sense of normalcy in our relations with India?

Clark: As minister, I accepted, for worse or for better, the advice of officials. On that level, there was a strong sense that India was unusually hard to work with, thus limiting some of the enthusiasm. Most of my personal time in India had to do with the Air India bombing, the negotiation of extradition arrangements afterwards, and handling the domestic implications of a tiny minority of Indo-Canadians who were committed to disruptive movements in India. These "crises" cast an immense shadow over our work.

Campbell: If you go back even earlier, Canada, India, and Poland were all members of the International Control Commission. To put it mildly, dealing with Indian counterparts on the ICC was not a very comfortable experience for Canadian foreign service officers. You have to remember that a significant portion—more than one in three foreign service officers—served on that commission in the late 50s and 1960s. There was a massive sense of betrayal with the 1974 nuclear explosions in India and subsequent policies. This conditioned the thinking and view of a whole generation in the department. Coupled with these experiences was the fact that India was a leading radical

advocate in the G77; it had a classic import-substitution high-barrier economy; and it had less than one percent of its economy based on trade. There wasn't a constituency either from the economic group in the department or coming from the community. In my view, that atmosphere hung on far too long. India has changed significantly, but it's fair to say that one cannot, for a moment, underestimate the impact of the nuclear issue as the poisoned apple in that relationship for 30 years.

Dobson: When you look at the US-India relationship, one thing that stands out is the advocacy role that the Indian diaspora has played—sometimes compared with the intensity and size of the Israeli lobby in the beltway. Is there any particular reason why the Indo-Canadian diaspora does not play more of a role?

Austin: I have watched our policy towards India for a very long time and it's been very comfortable to ride on the coattails of the United States vis-à-vis India. It wasn't our game; it was their game. We could sort of stay back and not push the edges. Why are we more interested in India as a nation now? Because of its economic rise. Are we really interested in playing the India card versus the Chinese? That's part of American foreign policy: do we go down that route? I don't know.

I'd like to challenge a point made by Wendy earlier in our conversation about an Asian policy that is seen through the prism of our relations with the US. Does Canada have to see itself through the prism of American interest in Asia? That takes us very much to the US-China bilateral, of which Japan is a part, and all the players are looking at American strategic interests. Do we have any strategic interests in Asia that can be expressed separately from the way the Americans express their interests? I think that is a critical part of our dialogue.

Dobson: By "prism" I definitely do not mean "prism of American interest." I mean that there is a reality for us that our closest neighbour is a world superpower, probably slowly being deposed. This relationship has got to be our central interest. Our proximity is a blessing and a curse. We have to make the most of that proximity. Given that reality, what kind of strategies should we have vis-à-vis Asia? It isn't that we follow on the coattails. It could very well be that we differentiate, but I think we're stuck with thinking about "alright, how does it add value or does it somehow detract or create costs in the relationship with the United States?"

Woo: Jack, you've been intimately associated with Team Canada in the 1990s. Would you give us a brief assessment of the historic significance of Team Canada in the broader Canada-China relationship?

Austin: Team Canada was largely my invention. When Chrétien took office, at an early caucus meeting, he came to me and said, "You're president of the Canada-China Business Council. I would like to build a new relationship with China on a commercial level. I'd like you to produce some ideas and bring them to us." It was quite fascinating that Helmut Kohl had just led a small business delegation to China and the Chinese had reacted very positively in terms of contracts and so forth. The idea developed that if Canada were to rise on the Chinese radar, we needed to make a very large impact because we are not a very large and important country on their horizon.

The proposal was for then-Prime Minister Chrétien to lead a business delegation of the largest possible size to China. Mike Harcourt was the premier of BC, the chair of the premiers' council, and my tennis partner. I spoke with Harcourt about our plans and he said, "Well, why don't you invite the premiers?" I responded, "Well, why don't you pick up the phone and call Mr. Chrétien; that's his decision, not my decision." And that is what happened. Chrétien was very excited and the premiers were on to it.

In November of '94, we went to China with 350 very senior executives and nine of the 10 premiers and the three territorial leaders. Despite the fact that the Chinese never initially signalled to us at what level they would respond, the results were quite amazing. Premier Li Peng came to validate our efforts at a major networking event in the banquet room of the Great Hall of the People with approximately 5000 people in attendance. We were the first foreign group to use the facility after the Great Hall instituted a policy of renting it out to generate revenue. In order to extend the network, we told the Canadian business people, "You buy a table and make sure that for every one Canadian businessperson, there are two or three Chinese business people." They said to us, "How can we get them to come? We're just opening relations, we don't even know them." To which I said, "If we're in the Great Hall and Premier Li Peng is coming, they'll be there."

The idea was to make a major impact while understanding that what the Chinese needed was validation domestically. Their leadership needed to be seen as acceptable to a developed country. The insights into Chinese thinking came from people who understood what was happening in China in the

department and outside the department. This is my most important point today. If we are going to have an effective foreign policy anywhere, but particularly in Asia, we have to know as much about their domestic situation as they do or we can't clearly form a foreign policy because all foreign policy is based on domestic imperatives.

Woo: You seem to be downplaying the commercial significance of the Team Canada mission.

Austin: I didn't mean to downplay it. Policy-wise, we were trying to lead Canadian business opportunities as a government. We followed it up with several more Team Canadas—bringing them here, going there, all with Chinese top leaders—President Jiang Zemin, Premier Zhu Rongji, President Hu Jintao in '05. Some businesses invested, but the truth is that there were factors affecting business interests, including the draw of the US market, the cost of doing business in China, the $10,000 air ticket, the hotel costs, the time spent away from your principal focus on the US market, the cultural contradictions, the lack of security in terms of contracts, and the rule of law. The government led by Prime Minister Chrétien played a critical role in leading the Canadian business community to opportunities in China, but a whole series of events just banked interest and commitment for the greater number. We need to have a much better idea of what makes a business person invest.

Campbell: There's been a fair amount of criticism of the Team Canada missions, including of course the concern about why the government should financially lead and support the business community in the first place. I never went on any Team Canada missions, but one of the side benefits that is not a commercial benefit is that many people considered it a useful exercise in Canadian nation-building in federal and provincial terms. In terms of the business community, getting to know each other had some value in itself. It had some unusual positive spinoffs that weren't the original objectives.

Dobson: But it wasn't carried through and that comes back to where we started with the issue of leadership and where we are currently, which is a situation where the prime minister apparently has no interest in building stronger ties with China. I guess we've covered this with Joe saying there's

no natural constituency so why would we make any long-term foreign policy commitment that's even a shadow of what they've done in Australia?

Clark: Well, quickly on that. When I talked about there not being a constituency, I'm not saying that there haven't been foreign policy or international trade successes; there have been. So what this really is about is leadership. Putting aside any inclinations which Mr. Harper might or might not have, most of the governments that wanted to do things and be active in the world drew their support disproportionately from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the interested business community.

There's another question that goes beyond leadership. What is the long-term viability of the Canada-Asia relationship? Are there strong-enough Canadian interests to allow initiatives that were started in the past to continue and to grow? We should not shortchange the importance of nurturing the constituency that exists and that is growing. It's like everything else—that opportunity can be picked up by a political leader and made into something much larger than it might have been.

Dobson: Joe, I think that's probably the most forwarding-thinking, important issue to come out of this discussion today. How do we nurture and grow the constituency that exists?

Clark: Let me come back to you with a question about Australia. To what degree is the high-quality analysis that you talk about university-driven rather than business-driven?

Dobson: I see mostly the university-driven, but there's also a very active business community as well. My point is that they've made strategic investments in building a cadre of expertise that we have not done in Canada.

Campbell: I agree with you totally, Wendy, which is one of the reasons why in '84, Mr. Trudeau overcame a lot of resistance in the Liberal cabinet to create the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. Let me give you a short illustration about Australia. The iron, coal, agriculture industry—virtually all of Australia's industries, including wine these days—is mobilized to supply the Chinese and Asian markets. Those resources have allowed Australia to build political penetration and academic penetration. In Canada, we do sell resources, but we have not followed up on the business trail to build up the

networks and connections. We've seen them in a corporate transactional way without strategic backup. The Australians have been way ahead of us in understanding the strategic value of their trade with Asia.

Dobson: That starts with the government making investments and creating a climate of trust with the Chinese. I mean, we haven't set a kind of 50-year plan. Asians are thinking 50 years ahead right now just because of having to understand the implications of 12-percent growth in China and eight- and nine-percent growth in India. It's not until the next election or the next minority government; it's 50 years when Asia will be much more central to the world economy and world affairs, barring of course, major security or environmental disruptions.

Woo: To whom should we look for leadership in the next phase of Canada-Asia relations?

Clark: It would be interesting to find some carefully drawn cross-section of the Asian-Canadian entrepreneurial community and ask them what might be done here. I'm interested in what the educational institutions might do, yet they are so constrained financially.

Dobson: There have always been tremendous budget constraints on what academic institutions can do. Again, I reiterate that we have not developed a concerted investment strategy in building a cadre the way Australia has done or the United States has done since 1958 through the funding provided to international education and research under title six of the US defense act.

Austin: Let me leap into your question as well. Leadership—where will it come from? It's got to come from a whole variety of places, but first and foremost, in my view, the Canadian public has to have much more information given to them about the relevance of Asia to their daily lives, to their futures, to their children's future. They need to understand but don't yet know the meaning of Asia. Why not? In part, the Canadian media have largely not been good vehicles for information. There are exceptions. The *Globe* has tried in a certain way, but its approach has been so negative about China. For example, Jan Wong kept beating up on China for Canadian audiences: was that in our national interest? The media have not had a focus because their readers have not had a focus.

One of the roles of the Asia Pacific Foundation is to provide information not just to special users but to the public at large. I remember early in the Asia Pacific Foundation programs, it had a program to send journalists to Asia. A number of very important journalists went to Asia and became excited about Asia, but returned home only to find their editors did not share the same sense of excitement. In other cases, universities like the University of British Columbia have tremendous potential; however, it has its Asia experts all in separate faculties, which I call silos. There is capacity at the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University, but the networking isn't there and a common agenda of Canadian interests still needs to be developed. And who will do that? It's going to have to come back to government, and currently the process has been arrested dramatically. Political leadership is essential.

From Alvin Hamilton and John Diefenbaker up to the Harper era, it has been political leadership that has tried to set a pace. Not consistently, as it gets distracted, but every so often tries to get back on track. For now, we have been shunted to the side. Paul Martin went in January of '05 to China and to Japan to continue the positive momentum of the Chrétien era with China and Japan. Japan made an investment: Toyota opened a new assembly plant in Ottawa as a consequence of Mr. Martin's visit to Japan to meet with Prime Minister Koizumi and then one-on-one with the chairman of Toyota. That kind of diplomacy was required in Asia, where the political leadership is paramount in the decision-making column. In September 2005, President Hu Jintao came to Ottawa and entered into an agreement that China would establish a strategic relationship with Canada. That strategic partnership was to be better defined by the deputies of the Chinese foreign ministry and the Canadian foreign ministry. This initiative was completely deep-sixed by the Harper government. In 1999, Premier Zhu Rongji said at a Team Canada meeting in Beijing that Canada was China's "best friend" in the developed world. That was the result of Team Canada, political leadership, and other efforts.

Mobilizing the business community is now a more pragmatic opportunity as more and more of the business community look for the alternative markets as the US market proves to be less viable. Finally, political leadership at the sub-national level is beginning to show its head in the vacuum of national leadership. We are beginning to see premiers visiting Asia—for example, Premier Campbell to India, Japan, and China, and Premier Charest, who is still basing his interests on the old paradigm that we've discussed. There needs to be a centre to this.

Dobson: As I mentioned earlier, the "Canada comes and goes" effect is visible when our premiers turn up to India and China but our prime minister doesn't turn up. This diffuse and seemingly disorganized approach is perceived as less than serious in the kind of strategic world that they live in.

Austin: The Asia Pacific Foundation has a potential role in raising Canadian appreciation and awareness of Asia. As a British Columbian, I want to say that Toronto is one of our biggest problems and our biggest opportunities. How do we reach a level of Asian consciousness in the Toronto community if it's not because of people with strategic reach in whatever profession they are in?

Woo: What kind of leadership can we expect from the policy community?

Campbell: The biggest failure that we've had in the last 25 years in our approach to Asia is the current stance of our political leadership on China. I think it is going to serve us very badly today and into the future. The bureaucratic machine, at the end of the day, is a vehicle to address the priorities of today's government. There's a tremendous wealth of untapped talent in the department and elsewhere in government. However, in the Department of Foreign Affairs, the budgetary situation is grim. It's been drawn down too many times. For example, just 10 years ago, the Japan desk had 10 officers; today, it just has one or two. There's still talent, but there's almost a collective sense of suspension in terms of policy development for the department as a whole, but particularly on Asia. Until we get that political signal, we are going to be in a situation of very little action. Leadership has to come from the top and with that you'd find a department that swings into action. That is not happening right now.

Woo: I have one question for all of you and then I think we should wrap up. This is a self-serving question and it's about the foundation. When you think about the role the foundation plays in this country, advocating and promoting strong relations between Canada and Asia, what would you say are the most important things that we should be focusing on in the years ahead?

Austin: I know that your byline is a leading source of knowledge on Asia; however, I think you've got to be a lot more than that. I think the APFC is going to have to become a relentless public advocate for Canada-Asia engagement. It's hard stuff, but this awareness is crucial.

Clark: I think the question of silos has been raised before. The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada can be perhaps the stimulus to bring people out of their silos. The idea of encouraging the interest of the Canadian International Council and others is excellent. If you look back, Canada has often had remarkable and nonpartisan commitment and leadership on issues that were normally divisive—social initiatives, economic issues, constitutional questions, international initiatives. We're talking now about a serious problem for Canada—the prospect that we could fail to connect with some of the fundamental international issues which will be driven by Asia. That could be described as a potential national small "c" crisis. It's not an ordinary problem. One does not want to rely too much on a change of government, because that might not happen, and any new government would face a full menu of other challenges. The issue is to prepare a climate of change that would be compelling enough to interest any new parliament. What might be done in the next couple of years to aggregate the resources and build the influence of Canadians who are interested in Canada's relations with Asia?

Dobson: One of the fundamental issues comes back to what I've been stressing: strategically, there's a shift going on in the world that Canadians don't understand and aren't really aware of beyond the fact that the US economy is in trouble. In order to raise Canadian awareness, we need some expertise in the country to do the research that's necessary to keep track of and to predict what's going on in the world, research that has a global focus rather than being based on the bilateral relationships that Canada has with one country or another. This is absolutely essential to broadening Canadian perspectives.

Austin: I absolutely agree and add that we have to avoid overbalancing our view of Asia as just a trade and business relationship. We have to approach Asia as a relationship amongst peoples, amongst broader interests—political, social, cultural, and academic. In some way, we have to attract Asians to be interested in us by being interested in them. So if I were looking at whatever groups would be assembled as our intellectual resources, how do we do that? We use the Asian-Canadian community. More than anything, I want to advocate a specific step: to ensure that our governments are equipped in their overseas missions to have what used to be called political or public diplomacy. In other words, information about Canada that is useful to the people in Asia,

making them see us as useful to them. Our diplomats are good but their mandates are too restricted.

Woo: Thank you all for a terrific discussion. We have only scratched the surface, but this conversation will continue as we share your observations and views with a much wider audience.