

Challenging British Perceptions of China

50 Years of SACU



Report of Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding's 50th Anniversary Symposium

30 May 2015
King's College London, Strand Campus

Organised in conjunction with the
Lau China Institute, King's College London

SACU'S MISSION

- To promote friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of Britain and China.
- To provide facts and analysis about China - not uncritically but always from a firm basis of friendship.
- To help the British people understand the meaning of China - past and present.



CPAFFC gift to SACU

.....'China is not simply a different country from our own...but a basically different civilisation. There is a much greater gulf of fundamental assumptions to be bridged as well as the fascinating differences that arise in the philosophy, art, landscape, language, religion, customs and so on. This requires a real effort towards understanding, the very purpose of our new Society.'
Joseph Needham, SACU's Inaugural Meeting, 15 May 1965



Joseph Needham (1900-1995) on the right in this photograph, meets Hu Dingyi, Chinese Ambassador, and Xie Heng



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INTRODUCTION

On 30 May 2015 the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding held a symposium at King's College London to celebrate 50 years of challenging British perceptions of China. At the inaugural meeting on 15 May 1965 Joseph Needham, one of the principal founders, emphasised that as China was not just a different country but a different civilisation what was required was “a genuine effort towards understanding”.

SACU organised a day-long programme of discussion and debate to explore how understanding had fared over the past 50 years and the prospects for the future. SACU members and other guests gathered to hear different perspectives and to give their views. The Chinese Ambassador, His Excellency Ambassador Liu Xiaoming, and Mr Song Jingwu, Vice President, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, attended to pay their own tributes. Others sent in messages of support. The event was organised in conjunction with the Lau China Institute of King's College London, and supported by a number of sponsors and donations.

Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, began the day by welcoming some 150 members and guests to the Symposium. A souvenir programme was provided to all those present at the event. A summary of the event was later published in China Eye, Issue (47), Autumn 2015.



Members and guests gathering for the symposium



Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, welcomes delegates

THEMES OF THE SYMPOSIUM: RICHARD POXTON

This account seeks to capture the themes of the various contributions. The focus of the day was on understanding and on challenging misunderstandings of China from the UK perspective. It was also concerned with the changing role of SACU over its 50 years, the current challenges and how the organisation should address the future. At its foundation SACU had a large and influential membership, and represented one of the very few conduits into a dialogue with China. All that has changed in the intervening 50 years: there are many different means of engaging with China and Chinese matters. SACU is now a small player in this scenario, with relatively few active members, and succeeds through the hard work of a few highly-committed volunteers. But understanding China remains an important issue, and arguably one where progress should be sought not least to overcome the steady flow of generally negative news stories from China in the UK press.

Since its beginnings SACU has been closely linked with Joseph Needham – he was key to establishing the organisation and his name has ensured a prominence at home and abroad that otherwise may have slipped away. His ongoing great work of *Science and Civilisation in China* is itself a major example of enabling a better understanding as the result of a considered approach: it helped transform the way the West thinks about China past and present, its history, culture and development. Needham revealed the immense debt that Western civilisation owed to China, and showed the importance of examining Chinese (and other) local traditions of science and knowledge. In many ways his understanding of Chinese civilisation changed the way educated people across the world thought about its development.

Now after 50 years, as the Ambassador pointed out, SACU was in possession of the 'Confucian mandate' to continue to advance understanding and friendship, and to bridge the gaps and strengthen the bonds. An important purpose of the symposium was to identify practical ways forward and to renew personal commitments.

Developments Over 50 Years

In 1965 Western governments were largely distrustful of China as global politics engaged in Cold War and more direct conflict in Vietnam. The founders of SACU at first sought to focus more on culture and civilisation than on politics, to attract support from influential people in Britain. SACU is to this day renowned for organising and leading some of the early tourist visits to China. It was probably due to the good name perceived in China of Needham and others that involvement with SACU became a vital means of getting into China. Needham's personal archives hold many requests from people unknown to him who wanted his reference in order to visit the country – most of which he dealt with personally.

In 1971 during the Cultural Revolution SACU organised a delegation to China. Being a friend of China was far from straight forward for those on the trip: such delegations were carefully guided and participants did not get a full picture of what was happening during this difficult time. Whilst in China it was announced that a USA table tennis team would visit China – ping pong diplomacy was on its way and pandas would not be far behind. Tour members gave positive if partial reports back on what they had seen.

Once diplomatic relations were restored between the two countries [1972], the British Government was concerned to promote what links it could. With official support the Great Britain China Centre was set up [1974] as an alternative to the more independent and highly-successful SACU.

In the 1980s the atmosphere was more positive, at least until 1989. Changes were taking place on the ground amidst greater debate and discussion about modernisation. SACU continued to promote tours to China, increasingly beyond what had now become a more established general tourist route. SACU tours sought a deeper understanding of what was happening in different parts of China, beyond the growing interest in commercial links. Perhaps the promotion of that greater understanding was more important in the longer term than whatever insights may have been gained at the time.

By this time SACU was no longer part of the mainstream of links between China and the UK not least as economic and commercial matters began

to dominate the agenda. Tourism itself became an important business, firstly into China but then from China to the West. Politics and economics became inextricably connected, presenting even more complex challenges of understanding for those who wanted to be part of the opportunities offered. Human rights, workers' rights, sustainable developments and the issue of Tibet all present major hurdles in the development of trading relations between China and the UK as they were also between China and the European Union. These are huge challenges that emphasize the importance of SACU being aware of the issues of the day but also being realistic in terms of what it can address itself.

The campaign launched by the Chinese in Britain organisation to erect a monument to the memory of the thousands of Chinese labourers who worked alongside the Allied forces in the 1914-18 War was a good example of a project helping to promote understanding in a practical way. SACU members were looking to promote the campaign in modest practical ways and in doing so supporting the work of people of Chinese origin now settled in the UK. Often unheard UK citizens of Chinese origin were now beginning to find their voices on issues that were also of concern to SACU. Chinese people in the UK were now a common sight whether as residents, students or visitors. Convergence was taking place in tastes and interests especially among younger people but it was also clear that myths and prejudices still existed: misunderstandings were still evident.

China itself continues to modernise and develop. It is doing so in a distinctive way that both retains aspects of Chinese culture whilst incorporating many Western traits. It is more pluralistic and complex than ever, and still hard to understand. To many Western eyes the government appears authoritarian and conservative, yet there is an evident loosening up of governance as well as a willingness to try out social, economic and political reforms. The Chinese Government is looking at how the rule of law works in the UK. Prosperity and stability are as important in China as elsewhere. It is impossible to predict the future here as elsewhere but the promotion of mutual understanding is crucial, rather than the deep mistrust which still prevails in US/China academic relations for example.

SACU Today and Looking Ahead

It was important to consider the implications of all of this for SACU as a small membership organisation looking ahead to its next 50 years. The attendance and lively discussion at the symposium showed that there was still a keen interest in promoting the aims of SACU. The attendance of the Ambassador and delegations from China showed that the organisation still had some recognised position and status. There were also important local partnerships evident on the day, not least the KCL Lau China Institute's hosting and the award of a prize to a student from Joseph Needham's school, Oundle.

Inevitably how SACU shaped its future would be influenced by the interests of those who were prepared to be actively involved. In addition it would continue to support partner organisations with similar aims, such as The Meridian Society in London.

The name of SACU and the Needham legacy give the organisation the opportunity to continue to make a contribution to the big picture of promoting understanding of China in the UK. In practice the way forward was seen to lie in the greater involvement in SACU of younger people. The challenges now are different from those in 1965 – in many ways tougher but also more promising. The new perspectives of people who had grown up in the digital age of a smaller world were crucial to enabling SACU to continue to have the ambition to continue to make an impact.





*Janice Dickson, Chairman, Scotland-China Association,
congratulates SACU on its 50th anniversary*



*H.E. Kojo Amoo-Gottfried, President, Ghana-China Friendship Association,
congratulates SACU on its 50th anniversary*

OPENING ADDRESS: HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR LIU XIAOMING

His Excellency Ambassador Liu Xiaoming opened the Symposium by congratulating SACU on its achievements in promoting understanding between the peoples of China and Britain over the past 50 years. Whilst both China and the international landscape had changed profoundly, building Anglo-Chinese understanding remained a necessary task. He went on to remark that now, after 50 years, SACU was in possession of the 'Confucian mandate' to continue to advance understanding and friendship, to bridge gaps and strengthen bonds, and he gave SACU his very best wishes.



*His Excellency Ambassador Liu Xiaoming
gives the Opening Address*

The text of His Excellency Ambassador Liu Xiaoming's speech:

It is a great delight to join you to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding.

Let me offer my warmest congratulations!

I quite admire the name of SACU. It highlights the very foundation of state-to-state relations, which is "understanding". As we often say,

Good relationship between nations is built on friendship between the people,

And friendship between the people derives from mutual understanding.

While admiring your name, I admire even more your achievements. You should be proud of your name. You should be proud even more of what you have achieved in promoting Anglo-Chinese understanding all these years.

In fact, understanding is an eternal theme for both China and Britain.

Back in the 1960s, the Cold War between the East and the West was raging. China and Britain were yet to have full diplomatic relations.

But it was right then that a group of like-minded Britons demonstrated extraordinary political courage and foresight. Resolved to break through the thick icy barriers of the Cold War, they founded the Society whose 50th birthday we are celebrating today.

Over the past 50 years, SACU has been committed to better understanding between China and Britain, and between the people of our two countries.

- You have worked hard to clear away misunderstandings and biases.
- You have organised exchanges of visits between the two countries.
- You have been sharing stories of the real China with the British public.

Between China and Britain, and indeed between China and the West, you are

an important platform for understanding and a channel for exchanges and cooperation. What you have done has an important place in the history of China-UK relations.

Fifty years on, the international landscape has changed profoundly. China in this new landscape has changed beyond recognition and continues the dynamic change with each passing day.

China-UK relationship had also made a quantum leap, from chargé d'affaire level to ambassadorial level, from partnership to comprehensive strategic partnership. Exchanges between the Chinese and British people are closer than ever, deeper than ever and more extensive than ever.

However, “understanding” remains a major subject between China and Britain, and indeed between China and the West. To be frank, Western understanding of contemporary China is far from sufficient. Old misunderstandings and biases may have dwindled but they are replaced with new ones.

Some people always prefer to see China through coloured lenses. Whatever they see in China, be it peaceful development path, economic upgrading or “One Belt, One Road” initiative, they would make the same noises. To them, these would always be a sign of “China threat” or an omen of “China’s collapse”.

To build Anglo-Chinese understanding – and indeed to increase understanding between China and the West – remains a long and arduous task. History has shown that understanding is the foundation and precondition for building a stable comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the UK in the long run. Only deeper understanding fosters deeper mutual trust; only deeper mutual trust generates deeper cooperation.

Dr Joseph Needham, SACU’s first Chairman, had devoted his whole life to promoting understanding of China. His efforts had not just improved the world’s understanding of the history of science and technology in China. More importantly, he had helped foster better understanding of China’s history, culture, social system and development path. He was certainly worthy of the

title of “People’s Friendship Envoy”. He was a great role model for us all.

Confucius said,

“At fifty, I knew the mandate of Heaven.”

Today, SACU turns fifty. On this very special day, I give SACU my best wishes from the bottom of my heart. I believe you not only know your mandate but are fully committed to it.

It is the mandate to advance China-UK understanding and friendship.

It is the mandate to carry forward, in this new age and with new ideas, the lofty cause of bridging gaps and strengthening bonds.

And it is the mandate to help to build the edifice of Anglo-Chinese understanding and to write a new chapter for a better and brighter future of China-UK relationship.

Thank you.

CPAFFC PRESENTATION TO SACU

Mr Song Jingwu, Vice President, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) led a five-person delegation from Beijing. He conveyed a message of congratulations from the CPAFFC President, Mme Li Xiaolin and presented Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, with the gift of a commemorative glass plate, engraved in both English and Chinese.



*Presentation to Zoe Reed, SACU Chair,
of gift by Song Jingwu, Vice President,
Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC)*

SPEAKERS PANEL 1: THE SACU EXPERIENCE

Chair: Dr Ralph Parfect, Acting Director, Lau China Institute,
King's College London

- John Gittings, former Guardian China correspondent
- Professor Tom Buchanan, University of Oxford
- Professor Jian jun Mei, Director, Needham Research Institute



Ralph Parfect, Lau China Institute, chairs Speakers Panel 1

JOHN GITTINGS

FORMER GUARDIAN CHINA CORRESPONDENT

John Gittings reflected on his first trip to China as a member of the 1971 SACU tour, and being shown the 'New Achievements of the Cultural Revolution.' He returned in 1981, leading another SACU tour, to find China changing rapidly, in a different and more positive atmosphere, with lively debate about what direction China should take. In conclusion he asked, "But how much did we understand China? How little did we understand China? How honestly did we understand China? These are the questions which perhaps we should still be asking today."



John Gittings

About John Gittings

John Gittings is a journalist and author who is mainly known for his work on modern China. John first travelled to China with SACU in 1971 and has kept in regular contact with the organisation over many years. After teaching at the University of Westminster, he worked at The Guardian (UK) for twenty years as chief foreign leader-writer and East Asia Editor (1983-2003). He is currently a Research Associate at the China Institute, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and an Associate Editor of the Oxford International Encyclopaedia of Peace. His book, *The Glorious Art of Peace: From the Iliad to Iraq*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2012.

The Text of John Gittings' Talk

There have been huge upheavals in China over the past 50 years since SACU was founded, huge advances, huge changes, a huge transformation at every level, economic, political and social. But in this session we are not going to talk about what has happened in China; our task is to talk about what we understood, or thought we understood, about what was happening in China, which is a very different thing. This is after all the Society of Anglo-Chinese Understanding, and our purpose has always been to understand, even if this has not always been an easy purpose to achieve.



Let me begin by recalling my first visit to China in April 1971, as a member of the second tour group sent out by the Society of Anglo-Chinese Understanding – it included Sally and Richard Greenhill whose wonderful photographs you are going to see later. This was at a point in time when the Cultural Revolution seemed to be winding down, although it would flare up again two years later.

What did we see on this tour, or perhaps I should say, what did we think that we saw?

I still vividly remember crossing the bridge from Hong Kong into China on foot, sinking into deep armchairs on the other side to meet our Chinese tour guides, and then proceeding in a leisurely train – Chinese trains always moved at a leisurely pace then – towards Guangzhou. Outside we saw paddy fields, small hills with lychee trees, and peasants at work with red flags around them.

Our guides were very keen to show us what were officially called the New Achievements of the Cultural Revolution, (wenhua da geming xinsheng shiwu), and we were very keen to be shown them.

There was the revolution in health – which for us was manifested especially by the scheme for training “barefoot doctors” to work in the countryside.

There was the revolution in management – the three-way system (sanjiehe) by which the management of a factory was in the joint hands of the managers, the technicians, and the workers. Or a school was run jointly by the teachers, the students and the local community (in theory at any rate).

And there was the revolution in education – with new curricula, open book exams – if there were exams at all, and the huge movement to send students which had graduated -- the “educated youth”(zhishi qingnian) sent down to the countryside or into factories to learn what real work was like, and to contribute their educated skills to the peasants and to the workers.

Embracing all this, it seemed to us, was a coherent doctrine of what was referred to as the “socialist transition”, a coordinated effort to move the whole of society in a particular direction. Mao Zedong had criticised the Soviet Union for abandoning this transition, and for being too dogmatic and too formalistic, for relying on empty words rather than real experience. (We paid particular attention to his Notes on a Soviet Textbook on Political Economy in which he made this critique.) We thought, or we hoped, that China was avoiding the mistakes of the Soviet Union.

We looked in great detail at the three-level structure of the people’s communes, and we tried to find out how the system of work-points – rewarding people according to their work but taking social factors into account – actually functioned. We visited Dazhai, where the accounting level had been moved from the team to the brigade level, and we were impressed by the common sense of the peasant leaders whom we met. We were less impressed by all the Communist Party officials who turned up from the province and the county to keep an eye on us.

China was very much isolated from most of the rest of the world. While we were there it was announced, sensationally, that an American ping-pong team would visit China. This was the beginning of the process which would lead up to the visit of US President Nixon to China a year later though we did not know

this at the time.

One of our guides was a fervent believer in the Cultural Revolution. When we heard the news about the American team, I suggested to him that this might be followed up by a Chinese ping-pong team visiting the US.

He became very agitated, almost angry. "Never!" he replied, "It will never happen! They may come to us, but we will never go to them".

We returned to England and gave positive, sometimes glowing, reports of what we had seen in China. In doing so, we suppressed or played down the occasional glimpses we had that things were not quite so wonderful as they seemed.

I remember for example that near Beijing we were taken to see a unit of soldiers who were helping the peasants in the fields – a demonstration of army-people unity. The army commander himself was there, a middle-aged and rather overweight officer. He picked up a hoe to use it, leant upon it and promptly broke it in half. We pretended not to notice, and ignored the reality that he clearly had had no idea what to do with the hoe, and that the whole event was staged for our benefit.

On another occasion, we visited a group of "educated youth" from Beijing University who were quartered in the countryside around Yan'an. We met a doctor who had been assigned to work with them – they had their own medical team – and asked what kind of problems the students had, supposing that they might have physical problems resulting from their hard manual labour. The answer was that the students were physically quite healthy, but that the most common problem was "nervous disease" – jingshen bing. We failed to reflect on what this might tell us about the students' real state of mind on being sent to the countryside – quite often at that time, supposedly for life.

I have always regretted ever since that we were too blinded by the formal requirements of "friendship" to understand clearly, or to report fully, everything we saw.



We did not live up to SACU's own declared aim which, as stated in 1965 when it was set up, was to interpret China positively, but not to avoid "constructive comment and sympathetic criticisms."

Let me move on now to 1980, when I led another SACU tour to China – I also made a number of other visits in those early years after the death of Mao Zedong and the return to power

of Deng Xiaoping.

The 1980s were an exciting decade, both because so much was happening in a very different and more positive atmosphere, and because no one quite knew in what direction things would move. There was lively theoretical debate and discussion about what had gone wrong, about what direction China should take and things were changing rapidly on the ground too.

There was the Democracy Wall in Beijing, encouraged for a while by Mr Deng, where all sorts of ideas were expressed for the future and tales were told about the dark side of the past. In 1980 I was lucky enough to coincide with an exhibition of modern art, staged by the young artists of the Stars, the xingxing, group in the China Art Gallery with official approval.

In the countryside, the first steps were being taken to give back to the village, or even to individual farmers, the responsibility for farming the land, the baochan dao dui, or even the baochan dao hu, system. But there was also talk of trying to retain the best features of the People's Commune system, or of building new and more genuine cooperatives.

On the factory floor, workers discussed how to make the pay-structure – the eight grade system – more flexible and more responsive to the actual effort put into their work. But there was also opposition to widening the income gap

too far, and opposition to creating a new privileged class.

In the academic world, economists and social scientists began to hold seminars to analyse the failures of the past and Mao's own responsibility, to look more critically at the role of the Communist Party, to discuss new interpretations of what socialism really means, both in terms of economic policy and in terms of political structures, democracy and one-party rule.

This new world of intellectual enquiry was fostered and encouraged by the Party Secretary-General Hu Yaobang, and many of the arguments appeared in the pages of the People's Daily and of several Party theoretical journals. Marxist scholars such as Professor Su Shaozhi played an important part in these discussions.

'Without democracy', he wrote in 1980, there can be no economic modernisation, no Four Modernizations ... It is important to ensure that the people truly have the power to manage the affairs of the state and of the enterprises."

In June 1986 the People's Daily would publish a commentary under the significant title: 'There can be no socialist modernization without socialist democracy'.

The Chinese media also began to publish what we might call exposé journalism, going down to the grassroots to make investigations, what was known as baogao wenxue, real reporting about real people, exposing corruption and incompetence, past and present.

SACU continued to play a very important role in the 1980s. Many other foreign tours were now going to China, but increasingly they followed what was rapidly becoming the standard tourist route, Beijing, Xi'an, The Three Gorges, Guilin and so on. The SACU tours tried to go further, to go deeper, to understand the nature of what was happening in China at every level in society. And at this stage the official Chinese travel agency, Luxingshe, and the various cultural bodies and offices, were still very keen to help SACU do this.

Western governments at that time were on the whole only interested in China for two reasons: one, because China was an ally against the Soviet Union; and two, because the Chinese market was beginning to open up, with the establishment of special economic zones along the seaboard.

SACU was interested in much more, and it tried to communicate this interest, and the diversity of what was happening, through its study tours, and in articles written for China Now, and at regular meetings often held in the Holborn Central Library.

I shall stop here in the 1980s, which was, speaking personally, the most exciting time for those of us following China's great revolution. But how much did we understand China? How little did we understand China? How honestly did we understand China? These are the questions which perhaps we should still be asking today.

PROFESSOR TOM BUCHANAN

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Professor Tom Buchanan gave an account of the history and early development of SACU, based on research for his book, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976*, (2012).



Professor Tom Buchanan

About Professor Tom Buchanan

Tom Buchanan is Professor of Modern British and European History at the Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford. He works on twentieth century British and European history, with an emphasis on the impact of external events on British politics. Specialist areas include: the impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain; China and the British left; and the history of Amnesty International and human rights campaigning in Britain. His book, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2012. It provides the most thoroughgoing work on the history of SACU.

An Account of Professor Tom Buchanan's Talk

Professor Tom Buchanan gave an account of SACU's stormy beginnings, based on research for his book, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976*, (2012). He commented on the long history of solidarity with China from the British Left, and the parallels between the war in Spain in the later 1930s and that in China. For his research, Professor Buchanan met Jim Pennington in Cheltenham and was given access to SACU's archives. [Jim Pennington was a long-standing SACU member and a former SACU Chair who was also instrumental in twinning Cheltenham with Weihai.] Tom commented that the archive papers included a box entitled, "Resignations" which had proved fascinating reading!

China was a victim of British imperialism and then of Japanese and American aggression. However, after 1949 China gradually emerged as a powerful state. The war with India 1962 established China as a regional power but this was difficult for the British Left; which admired both; they had to choose between them. British sympathy for China could no longer be taken for granted and this has been a challenge for SACU.

The British China Friendship Association (BCFA) – established in 1949 – was under the control of the Communist Party of Great Britain and key members were Moscow adherents, seeing China as a second fiddle to the Soviet Union.



For Joseph Needham and others the priority was China. SACU was not to be another politically-dominated organisation but was to involve prominent figures with an admiration for Chinese culture and interested in explaining China to the wider world. But the world was changing fast and, after a successful start in May 1965, the launch of the Cultural Revolution soon brought matters to a crisis point.

SACU's unity was undermined as those primarily interested in culture became increasingly

unwilling to be associated with this new turn of events. Some left, but other new members, many from the radicalized student movement joined, and SACU sought to defend China against an increasingly hostile Western press.

Despite the turmoil, in the early 1970s SACU was probably at the peak of its influence. With still no Ambassadorial relations between Britain and China, SACU was the principal point of cultural contact between the two countries: organising tours for groups of academics, journalists and students. However, the world turned again with Nixon's visit to Beijing. The British Establishment, realizing that SACU, an organisation now leaning towards the Left, was in pole position with regard to cultural relations with China, took the initiative, once full diplomatic relations had been restored [1972], to set up the Great Britain China Committee (GBCC). This committee of the 'Great and the Good' (with the Foreign Office discretely in the background) was intended to marginalize SACU.

Tours became increasingly important for SACU, but by the 1980s, with the GBCC on one side and the establishment of commercial companies like Voyages Jules Verne, on the other, the organisation was being squeezed in a pincer. From the mid-70s the left-wingers in SACU were on the back foot, especially after Deng Xiaoping's adoption of economic reforms and the open door policy.

The 1980 SACU delegation to China reported that, "the Chinese hosts' main interest was in economic construction, whereas ours was in politics." On a visit to a factory, they reported seeing large posters advocating "Total Quality Control", which these delegates saw as "capitalist concepts". SACU began to lose support from the British Left, a trend which came to a head in 1989 [with the Tiananmen Square protests].

PROFESSOR JIANJUN MEI

DIRECTOR, NEEDHAM RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Professor Jianjun Mei considered the legacy of Dr Joseph Needham, a founder of SACU. He “devoted his lifetime efforts not just to writing his monumental series, *Science and Civilisation in China*, but also to promoting a deeper understanding of China in a rapidly changing world.” The Needham Research Institute was just about to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Dr Needham’s death.



Professor Jianjun Mei, Director, Needham Research Institute

About Professor Jianjun Mei

Professor Jianjun Mei is the Director of the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge; President of the International Society for the History of East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine; Fellow of Churchill College; and Fellow of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. He is an archaeo-metallurgist specializing in the origins and role of metallurgy in Early China, and cultural interactions between China and the West. In recent years he has been a leading member of the team formed to write the volume on non-ferrous metallurgy for the *Science and Civilisation in China* series, founded by Joseph Needham.

The Text of Professor of Jianjun Mei's Talk

I am very pleased and honoured to be invited to join today's event and to be given a chance to speak here. First of all, I wish to represent the Needham Research Institute to offer our warm congratulations to SACU for a successful 50 years. Over the past 50 years, SACU has made considerable contributions in many forms to a better understanding of China in Britain. Dr Joseph Needham, a founder of SACU, devoted his lifetime efforts not just to writing his monumental series, *Science and Civilisation in China*, but also to promoting a deeper understanding of China in a rapidly changing world. Therefore, at the event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of SACU, it is a good occasion for us to show our deep respect to Dr Needham, and to reflect on his intellectual heritage.

The most obvious intellectual heritage of Dr Needham's legacy is of course his multi-volumes and monumental series, *Science and Civilisation in China*, namely SCC. 25 volumes have been published so far and 3 more volumes are in the process of writing and production. This series has been hailed as "enormously influential in integrating China into world history, and in shaping the idea of China among the educated public in both East and West", "the greatest single act of historical synthesis and inter-cultural communication ever attempted", and that it "effectively changed the way the world understood the development of science." Through SCC, Needham has successfully revealed to us the immense debt Western civilization owed to China.

Dr Needham had two basic beliefs. The first is that modern science is not just 'Western' but 'universal': local traditional sciences discovered truths about the natural world that eventually flowed into modern science as rivers into the sea. The second is that China was a locality whose traditional science can be shown to have contributed significantly to the evolution of modern science. These two beliefs are deeply rooted in many of Dr Needham's writings on the development of science and technology in China.

As we can see, Needham's work arose from a clear need to recognise the

important contributions Chinese civilization made to the world. It was a pioneering effort to examine the development of science and civilization in China in a most systematic and detailed way, and to seriously challenge the Eurocentrism which was prevalent during the 1940s-50s. Dr Needham actually founded a new academic subfield, East Asian History of Science, Technology and Medicine. He not only inspired many young scholars to enter into this new field, but also demonstrated the necessity and importance of studying local traditions of science or knowledge systems all over the world in their own right. I was among many young scholars who became interested in the Chinese history of science and technology because of reading Dr Needham's book. Few academic historians are comparable to Dr Needham, who has influenced the ideas of so many educated people around the world and transformed their understandings of the development of civilizations in the world.

2015 is the twentieth anniversary of Dr Needham's death. The Needham Research Institute is going to organise a workshop to commemorate this occasion. There will be more than twenty scholars from all over the world coming to Cambridge to participate in this event. We hope this will provide us with a chance to discuss Needham's intellectual heritage. The mission of the Needham Research Institute is to promote studies of East Asian history of science, technology and medicine. In a broad sense, we are working towards a better understanding and mutual appreciation among peoples across the world, especially for promoting East-West interaction. I am confident that, together with SACU and many other organisations, NRI will make further contributions to promoting communications between Great Britain and China.

Finally, I would like to offer my best wishes to SACU for another successful fifty years.



*Ravi Bhoothalingam, SACU member,
joins the discussion from the floor*

SALLY AND RICHARD GREENHILL SLIDESHOW OF 1971 SACU TOUR INTRODUCED BY MICHAEL SHERINGHAM, MERIDIAN SOCIETY

Michael Sheringham, Director of Talks, Meridian Society, introduced the slideshow that was to be played during the lunch break. Sally and Richard Greenhill, professional photographers, joined an early SACU Tour in 1971. Michael Sheringham and John Gittings were on the same tour. Images of contemporary China were rare at that time. Their colourful photographs, of people, families, communes, nurseries, factories, street scenes, countryside, captured everyday life and did much to show a changing China to the outside world. They were to make more visits in later decades and their work has become a valuable record of developments in China.



*Michael Sheringham, Meridian Society, introduces
Sally and Richard Greenhill's slideshow*

**ADDRESS: MR SONG JINGWU, VICE PRESIDENT,
CHINESE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION FOR
FRIENDSHIP WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES
(CPAFFC)**

Mr Song Jingwu, Vice President, CPAFFC, said that the Association now had friendly and cooperative relations with nearly 500 non-government organisations or institutions in 157 countries. Relations with SACU were established 39 years ago with numerous exchanges having taken place since. "Now China and UK are expanding trade and making more frequent people-to-people exchanges. Under such circumstances, it is even more important that we promote mutual understanding."



Mr Song Jingwu, Vice President, CPAFFC, addresses the symposium

The Text of Mr Song Jingwu's speech

Respected Chair Zoe Reed, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Today we gather here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding. First of all, please allow me to extend, on behalf of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, sincere congratulations to SACU, and heartfelt thanks to the people in all walks of life who have long endeavoured to promote China-UK friendship.

50 years ago, China and UK were yet to establish ambassadorial diplomatic relations, and most Western countries lacked understanding of China. Dr Joseph Needham, an old friend of China, together with hundreds of people of vision, established SACU in London with an aim to present a real China to the Western world, and the UK in particular, and dispel discrimination towards and misunderstandings about China, which has greatly contributed to China-UK and China-Europe relations. The establishment of SACU shows the great political courage of Dr Needham and other visionary people in the UK and their aspiration to strengthen China-UK friendship.

39 years ago, as an organisation engaged in carrying out people-to-people exchanges and enhancing mutual understanding between different peoples, the CPAFFC established friendly and cooperative relations with SACU. This morning, I have listened carefully to many SACU members' stories of China, and they all have their special experiences. Though they differ in political positions and social background, they share one thing in common: they harbour deep understanding of China, and they endeavour to promote China-UK relations, which greatly moved me. In the 1970s and 1980s, 18 delegations were exchanged between our two organisations, which jointly made enormous pioneering work for China-UK people-to-people friendship. In 1978, the CPAFFC's Vice President Chu Tunan led a delegation to the UK and was received by Lord Speaker Jones. In 1979, SACU's Vice President [Felix] Greene led a delegation of British dignitaries to China and was received by Mr Deng Xiaoping. In 2008, Chair [Zoe] Reed led a delegation to join the Beijing Olympic Games. In 2010, SACU sent a delegation to participate in the Second Sino-European Agricultural Seminar. In 2014, Vice President Jenny Clegg and Mr Chris Henson paid a special visit to China to attend our Association's 60th anniversary. In the same year, CPAFFC Vice President Li Jianping led a delegation to the UK and visited our friends. And the two sides reiterated their aspirations to work closely for China-UK long-term friendship. "Bosom friends make distance disappear." The friendly exchanges and cooperation between our two organisations are the best example of this ancient Chinese poem.

At present, the China-UK comprehensive strategic partnership enjoys a

sound momentum, with ever-increasing practical cooperation in all fields and a deeper people-to-people and cultural exchange. Both China and the United Kingdom, with long histories and unique cultures, have not only left rich legacies in the Eastern and Western civilisations, but also provided precious resources for the two peoples' mutual understanding and friendship. The key to sound relations between states lies in the affinity between their peoples, which largely stems from mutual understanding. Culture shortens our distance and connects our hearts. Now China and UK are expanding trade and making more frequent people-to-people exchanges. Under such circumstances, it is even more important that we promote mutual understanding.

Our Association has established relationships of friendly cooperation with nearly 500 non-government organisations and institutions in 157 countries. Entrusted by the government, we coordinate and oversee the work of establishing and developing friendship-city relations between China and other countries and promote exchanges and cooperation between their localities and cities. Up to now, we have established over 2200 pairs of friendship provinces (states) and cities. We are willing to work with SACU, on the basis of people-to-people exchanges, with an aim to connect people's hearts, promote cultural mutual learning between the two countries, and enhance mutual understanding between the two peoples, especially among the younger generation.

As a major part of his life's effort, Dr Needham had built a bridge of understanding between the Eastern and Western cultures, pushing our two countries' friendly cooperation moving forward continuously. Looking into the future, under the guidance of Dr Needham's spiritual wealth, let's take the 50th anniversary of SACU as a new starting point, and work together to make new contributions to the China-UK friendship and mutual understanding.

May our friendship be passed on from generation to generation. May SACU enjoy a broader prospect.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS: PROFESSOR SUN HUA, CHINA CENTRE
FOR EDGAR SNOW STUDIES, EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF YUANPEI COLLEGE, PEKING UNIVERSITY -
SPONSOR OF THE ESSAY PRIZE**

Professor Sun Hua, China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies, Peking University, spoke of Dr Joseph Needham's aid to China during World War II. He then spoke of several British scholars who made great contributions to China. Finally he discussed Peking University's plans to publish several works by British friends during the following year [2016] to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Long March.



*Professor Sun Hua,
China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies, Peking University*

The Text of Professor Sun Hua's Speech

Respected Chairman Zoe Reed, Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

Today I am very honoured to participate in the forum of the 50th anniversary for SACU, and commemoration for one of the outstanding friends of Chinese people, Dr Joseph Needham. During World War II, Dr Joseph Needham came to aid China. He travelled over 5,000 miles in China, offered support to the Chinese scientific community by giving more than 7,000 science books to

Chinese universities and libraries, and funded more than 60 Chinese students to study in UK. His famous work, *Science and Civilisation in China*, played an important role in disseminating the splendours of Chinese civilisation to the world.

He founded SACU 50 years ago in order to have more British people understand the different cultural background and the different political system in China. On the basis of his friendship spirit, we hope we could be helpful for people from other countries of the world to better understand the development and changes in China today. It is the 70th anniversary of the Anti-Fascist War Victory this year. Dr Jenny Clegg, whose father Arthur Clegg was the leader of the China Campaign Committee from the UK during the World War II, made several speeches in Peking University and other China Universities. We hope that more and more young people today will start to understand the International friends who helped to build new China by contributing to people-to-people exchanges; something that has now become mainstream in International relationship development.

Therefore, Peking University is keen to be involved in the celebration today, aiming to appreciate the scholars from UK who have made great contributions to us. From 1920 to 1921, Bertrand Russell gave 5 series of lectures in Peking University and wrote a book, *The Problem of China*. Mr Sun Yat-sen praised him as the only Westerner with a complete understanding of China. After the founding of new China, William Empson, who was teaching Shakespeare in Peking University, was highly respected by his students. Glyn W. Humphreys from the University of Birmingham has been teaching in Peking University since 2000, and opened the door to the study of Psychology for the students.

I come from Yuanpei College in Peking University. It takes a lead in China's undergraduate education reform and is characterised by an undergraduate tutorial system. This system was established in Yanching University by Mr Michael Lindsay from Oxford University in 1937. The most popular major in Yuanpei College today is Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE), just the same as Michael Lindsay's major in Oxford University. He played a pioneering role in Chinese higher education, and made an important contribution to Chinese people's Anti-Japanese War at the same time in Yanching University.

There were numerous professors from the United Kingdom. They not only actively supported the student movement, but also put personal devotion into the Chinese national revolution. Physics Department Dean of Yenching University, William Band, left the campus for the Anti-Japanese war in 1941 with Michael Lindsay. Ralph Lapwood joined “Gung Ho” (which were the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives) as an observer. Harold Shadick, who had been teaching Shakespeare in Yenching University, translated Shih-Chi (The Historical Records) when imprisoned in the Japanese army’s prison in Weifang, Shandong Province, and also organised concerts to encourage the prisoners.

Since the Anti-Japanese War, British friends have been active in raising awareness of China to the world by publishing books about the developing new China, for example Michael Lindsay’s works, *Notes on Educational Problems in Communist China, 1941–1947* (1950), and *China and the Cold War: a Study in International Politics* (1955).

In recent years, the International Friends Book Series has been published, including a number by British friends, such as *Aid China 1937-1949: A Memoir of a Forgotten Campaign*, by Arthur Clegg, *I See a New China*, by George Hogg, *The Restraining Hand: Captivity for Christ in China*, by Rudolf Alfred Bosshardt.

Next year is the 80th Anniversary of the Long March in China. We would like to publish several books by British friends, such as Dick Wilson’s famous book, *The Long March 1935: The Epic of Chinese Communism’s Survival*. He was the Chief Editor of *The China Quarterly* in SOAS, University of London. If you here have any ideas regarding publications, you are more than welcome to make suggestions!

For decades, substantial China–UK relationship development has been achieved despite the many ups and downs. The relationship between China and UK has never been closer than today. Chinese people and British people will be able to better understand each other, which was Dr Joseph Needham’s dream. It is exactly what he wanted and what he and SACU spent so many years working toward. Thank you!

PRESENTATION OF PRIZE

Professor Sun Hua, China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies, Peking University, introduced the Essay Competition which was sponsored jointly by Peking University and SACU for students at Oundle School (Joseph Needham's former school). Students were asked to discuss the statement, "Joseph Needham reminded us that we should understand the meaning of China both past and present. Discuss." Minister Counsellor Xiang Xiaowei presented the £100 prize to Ms Annabelle Barker, student at Oundle School. [Annabelle's essay was later published in China Eye, Issue (47), Autumn 2015.]



*Minister Counsellor Xiang Xiaowei
presents the Essay Prize to Annabelle Barker,
student at Oundle School, Joseph Needham's former school*

SACU PLANS FOR GOLDEN YEAR: ZOE REED

Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, outlined the Golden Year programme of events to be held over the following months to celebrate SACU's 50th Anniversary. Information will be given on the society's website www.sacu.org, in China Eye, by e-newsletter and on SACU's Facebook and Twitter pages.



Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, outlines the Golden Year Programme

GEORGE HOGG FUND LAUNCH: JENNY CLEGG

Dr Jenny Clegg launched the George Hogg Education Fund, named in memory of George Hogg. The fund addresses one of SACU's key objectives - to promote and advance the education of the Chinese people in aspects of Britain and the British people.

Little known today in his own country of Britain, George Hogg (1915-1945) has a legendary status in China's North West for his work in the wartime co-operative movement and later as a headmaster of a school for war orphans. Hogg went to China after graduating from Oxford University in 1938, initially working as an independent war correspondent for the Associated Press. In 1939 he became involved, through Rewi Alley, in the Gung Ho Chinese Industrial Co-operatives (CIC) movement, taking on the job of headmaster of the Bailie Co-operative technical training school in Shuangshipu, Shanxi Province in 1942. In 1944, to escape the advance of war across North China, he led his 60 orphan students on a 700 miles (1,100 km) trek over snow-bound mountains to Shandan, Gansu Province. There he set up a new school, only to die tragically of tetanus shortly after, aged just 30.

A key aspect of Hogg's legacy was his war reporting which eschewed the 'blood and guts' style - to capture the everyday lives of Chinese folk in wartime. His book, *I see a New China*, published in 1944, was received with acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic as a 'straightforward and unpretentious' record of China at war, in which 'compassion and respect for the ordinary Chinese people, and with this an optimism about China's future, shines through... never more so than in his descriptions of the village cooperatives and their members'

In 2013, SACU's tour, 'In the Footsteps of Joseph Needham', visited the present day Bailie School in Shandan, and also established a formal link with the International Committee of CIC (ICCIC), revived by Rewi alley in 1997.

The George Hogg Fund aims to: promote educational exchange between localities and institutions in Britain and China with a particular association

with George Hogg and will seek to disseminate understanding of the Rochdale co-operative principles in China. At the same time it will further promote understanding of China in Britain by opening a new window for SACU members to get to know more about life at the grass roots level in China.

The fund will operate through SACU's existing link with the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives (ICPIC), of which the Shandan School is a member. Financing for the fund will come from sources additional to SACU membership, raised specifically for the support of the project.

SACU's website www.sacu.org has further information and donations to the George Hogg Fund can be made through the website.



PRACTITIONERS PANEL 2: UNDERSTANDING CHINA – THE WHATS, THE WHYS AND THE HOWS

Chair: Sam Beatson, Lau China Institute, King's College London

- Professor Kerry Brown, University of Sydney
- Glyn Ford, former Labour MEP
- Steve Lau, Chair, Chinese in Britain Forum
- Professor Jude Howell, LSE
- Graham Perry, former SACU Vice Chair



Practitioners' Panel, left to right: Graham Perry, Steve Lau, Professor Jude Howell, Professor Kerry Brown, Glyn Ford

PROFESSOR KERRY BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Professor Kerry Brown spoke of the complexity of trying to explain China. There is a shortage of suitable words and a lack of intellectual resources when discussing the politics of China. He then identified and discussed three themes of the current leadership: Urgency; Global China; and Opportunities.

About Professor Kerry Brown

Kerry Brown is Professor of Chinese Politics and Director of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. He directed the Europe China Research and Advice Network funded by the European Union from 2011 to 2014 and is an Associate Fellow on the Asia Programme at Chatham House, London. His main interests are in the politics and society of modern China, its international relations and political economy. After joining the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 1998, he served as First Secretary, Beijing from 2000 to 2003. He is a Senior Fellow of the China Policy Institute at Nottingham University and the LSE Ideas Centre, as well as being an affiliated scholar with the Mongolia and Inner Asian Studies Unit at Cambridge University. His recent book, *The New Emperors: Power and the Princelings in China* (I.B.Tauris, 2014) has been widely reviewed.

An Account of Professor Kerry Brown's Talk

Joseph Needham spoke of the human condition, the commonality we are always reaching towards. You cannot engage with another culture without being changed by it. We need to work towards greater understanding of ideology and political decision making in China. Professor Kerry Brown was most struck by the paucity of our vocabularies and intellectual resources when talking about politics in China. We needed to understand why people in institutions like the Chinese Communist Party do the things they do, and the context in which they work, rather than making hasting judgements at the outset just because of ideological reservations we might have towards

one-party systems. Why do people believe certain things in these institutions, and what is the nature of their belief? What do we really understand of the political culture and the way it has produced someone like Xi Jinping? Ten years ago, most people would not have believed he would become the sort of leader he is, when he was a provincial figure.

Looking at the current leadership and the context they work in, Professor Kerry Brown identified three characteristic themes which are worth tracking: Sense of urgency within China; Global China; and Attendant Opportunities.

Urgency. There is a sense of this being an era of urgency, the idea of there being goals in the future which have to be achieved, and achieved quickly for China to make it to the next level of development. 2049 will be the centennial of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Reaching this goal will give rise to a sense of power, a country that is about to fulfil its potential, its project of modernity. But this will not be any easy target to reach. Crucial things could happen along this path that upset things. This era will be one when lots of tricky decisions need to be made, many of which could go wrong. Sometimes actions appear brutal, but made because of an extraordinary sense of pressure, of political imperatives. This will not be an easy path.



Global China. This is the real era of the rise of global China. Even the most seemingly-domestic issues within China will have potential global reach. Chinese citizens, all 1.4 billion of them, will have an impact individually on the way in which the world develops, economically through their consumption spending, environmentally through their use of energy, and politically, through the decisions they make about the diplomatic role they want their country to play. Take one statistic that shows the ways in which people inside

China are reaching outside the country as never before: between 1949-1978 there were 750,000 journeys into and out of China; last year [2014] there were 50 million.

Opportunity. This is an era of opportunity, collaboration and challenge, for China and for the outside world. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) held its first formal meeting this month [May 2015]. The AIIB was an initiative of China to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region. It has 57 founder members, including many Western countries such as UK, Germany and France, but its formation was resisted by USA, Japan and Canada, and initially also by Australia. This is symptomatic of the nature of problems which originate in Beijing. China is taking on a new guise as an international actor, and one to which those outside need to be flexible, pragmatic and creative in response.



Professor Kerry Brown and Glyn Ford

GLYN FORD, FORMER LABOUR MEP

Glyn Ford focussed on the issue of EU-China relations, noting the unbalanced and dysfunctional relationship between the three global powers of USA, European Union and China. He outlined the reasons why the EU does not seriously engage with China but argued that it is in Europe's interest to seek a more balanced relationship "where we simultaneously co-operate and compete with both Beijing and Washington."

About Glyn Ford

Glyn Ford is an elected Member of the British Labour Party's National Policy Forum; a founder member of Polint, a UK-based EU consultancy focussing on European internal politics, international relations and international trade; and a Board Member of the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS) and the North East Asian Economic Forum (NEAEF). For over 25 years, until 2009, he was a Member of the European Parliament for Greater Manchester, serving on both the International Trade and Foreign Affairs Committees, particularly on dossiers related to Asia, and acting as 'shadow' on the EU-Japan and EU-China trade agreements. Prior to entering the European Parliament, he was a Senior Research Fellow in the University of Manchester's Department of Science and Technology Policy and was, at various times, a Visiting Fellow / Professor at the University of Sussex, the University of Tokyo and the East-West Centre in Hawaii.

The text of Glyn Ford's talk

Can I thank SACU for the kind invitation to speak to you today on your 50th Anniversary. While my interest in China doesn't quite stretch back to your beginnings it gets – for me at least – surprisingly close. After nearly a quarter of a century, I've just moved house and in the move discovered amongst other things, including some early SACU pamphlets, an article from Tony Benn, entitled, China: land of struggle, criticism and transformation, published in New Scientist in 1972 (Vol.53, p10-12, 6 January 1972) after a trip to China – I

wonder if SACU were involved in its organisation - in which he argued that we could learn from China the need to completely re-examine our policies and institutional architecture.

I was a Labour MEP for 25 years, spending most of my time on the International Trade and Foreign Affairs Committees. Immediately prior to my initial election in 1984, I was a Visiting Professor at Tokyo University, consequently I specialised initially in Japan and then increasingly in North East Asia, Japan, China and the two Koreas. It was in these early days that I had my one and only – brief - conversation with Joseph Needham. My mentor in Japan had been Dr Shigeru Nakayama, who was a friend of Thomas S. Kuhn the author of the path breaking *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Dr Nakayama was in the UK and he gave me a number to call to arrange for us to meet. When I called it was Needham who answered and put me through. Even then I was in awe. A few years earlier I had reviewed Gary Werskey's *The Visible College* (1978, OUP) for the *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* (Spring, 1980) where Needham's exploits had loomed large in this collective biography of a pantheon of British left-wing scientists including JBS Haldane and JD Bernal.

Over thirty years on I'm still in Brussels working on trade and political issues in East Asia. The reality is that currently there are three global powers: the US, the EU and China. But this triad of powers is in an unbalanced and dysfunctional relationship. To paraphrase Beijing, the relationship between the US and the EU is 'like lips and teeth', while the Washington – Beijing Axis shows all the features of a love-hate relationship with China too threatening to be ignored and too threatening to be fully befriended. It is the EU – China relationship that is the weak leg of the triangle.

The next two years will be crucial in terms of where EU-China relations will go in the coming decades. At the moment it's a car crash waiting to happen and the 'friends' of China are in denial. Next month (June 2015) we will have the EU-China Summit in Brussels, where for the third time of asking Beijing will offer Brussels a Comprehensive Partnership Agreement covering trade, investment and political co-operation. They want the EU to at least explore the options for the opening of negotiations on a possible EU – China Free

Trade Agreement (FTA). Yes, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will make the right noises, which will be echoed by Council President Donald Tusk, but absolutely nothing will happen.

The EU is neither willing nor able to seriously engage with China. Brussels is obsessed with Washington. The overarching priority is the conclusion of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US – although civil society may have more to say about that in the coming months. Washington is more interested in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal with Japan, and Vietnam, Malaysia and Australia amongst others that will effectively – whether by accident or design – contain Beijing. For many in the US at least it's an attempt to isolate China. One is tempted to ask which part of the Pacific is Vietnam on?

China's offer of a Comprehensive Partnership Agreement is Beijing's attempt to reach out to the EU to offer a re-balancing of Brussels' relationships with China and the US. But the EU prefers to collaborate with the past rather than partner the future. Moreover, with all the sensitivities that exist between China and Japan, the EU is eagerly awaiting the passage of Japanese Prime Minister Abe's new Defence guidelines to engage in joint security operations.

While Brussels will not countenance any discussions on a FTA with Beijing even though it's currently in the process of negotiating FTAs with Japan, India and most of the ASEAN group of countries, there are currently two trade issues on the Agenda that cannot be avoided. First there are on-going negotiations on a EU-China Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), but this is not quite what it seems as for some this is a mackerel designed to catch a sprat. The big push – at least in the European Parliament (EP), of which more later – was a BIT with Taiwan. Now as the EU respects the 'One China' Policy this was only feasible as part of an even-handed approach with the Taiwan negotiations one-step behind those with Beijing. The EP's response to the initial announcement by the European Commission of both BITs was a ringing endorsement of the BIT with Taiwan and a reference to moving on to a FTA afterwards, while for China it was a grudging acceptance ringed with conditions insisting that Beijing must first respect human rights, improve labour rights, engage in sustainable development.



Why is the EP so anti-China and why does it matter? First Beijing suffers from a toxic coalition of hostile forces in the EP. There is a strong Human Rights lobby in and around the EP that – rightly – has concerns that despite the enormous progress since 1989 there is still work to do. There is also a serious Tibet lobby in the EP that promotes serial visits to Brussels and Strasbourg by the Dalai Lama,

plus a Taiwan Lobby that is often way out in front of Taipei in terms of the positions it advocates. The three groups feed off each other, with the whole greater than the sum of the parts, almost guaranteeing there will be virtual monthly resolutions during the European Parliament's Strasbourg Sessions critical of China in one form or another.

In the past these serial condemnations were an irritant and no more. However, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 gave the EP sweeping new powers over trade policy. Now no trade agreement can enter into force without the approval of the EP. Frankly, even if the Commission wanted – and one suspects it doesn't – it has no prospect of successfully taking a EU – China FTA through the EP. Even a BIT will prove difficult unless the Commission is tactically astute and determined taking the China and Taiwan deals through consecutively, with the promise that if the China Treaty fails to gather the required support they will withdraw the following Taiwan agreement.

Yet this is not the only problem. In 2001 China was admitted to the World Trade Organisation with the promise that the US and the EU would grant China Market Economy Status (MES) after 15 years. That period is up in December 2016 and Beijing was under the fond impression that this

will be automatic. The Lisbon Treaty gives the EP a veto over all Trade Agreements with the European Commission, confirming that the granting of MES will require legislative change that the EP can – and will – force to a vote. Congress is watching with interest and will follow Europe's lead.

Too many fail to recognise within the EU that our interests are no longer – if they ever were – identical with those of the United States. Europe needs to take its own path determined by our own interests. Amongst the 'Triad Powers' this will require a more balanced relationship where we simultaneously co-operate and compete with both Beijing and Washington. China shares ours – and Needham's – humanistic traditions and values in a way that the increasing religiosity of US culture and politics is moving away from. Europe and China have much to learn and teach each other. China is open to Europe while Europe is less open to China. Perceptions need to be changed.

I am reminded of a couple of China – Europe relationships that deserve to be better known. First at the end of the Korean War one Royal Marine, Andrew Condon, a POW from Scotland, chose – along with a score of US soldiers – to stay behind in China. Second, recently a Spanish edition of a Chinese book was published, *Los Brigadistas Chinos en la Guerra Civil: La Llamada de Espana (1936-39)* (*The Call of Spain: The Chinese Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39)*) by Hwei-ru Tsou and Len Tsou, that described the exploits of the over 100 Chinese volunteers who fought in Spain with the International Brigades.

There is a big job to be done if EU – China relations are not to founder in the coming years. We must link theory and practice as in a way Tony Benn urged almost 45 years ago. SACU has an illustrious history, but I'm a politician, not an historian. Our job is not to describe the world but change it. This is the beginning of a new fight and SACU needs to gear itself up to go 'back to the future'.



Glyn Ford



STEVE LAU, CHAIR, CHINESE IN BRITAIN FORUM

Steve Lau is chair of The Chinese in Britain Forum. He also chairs the Strategic Partnership Board of the 'Ensuring We Remember' campaign to establish a permanent memorial in the UK to the Chinese Labour Corps who served under British command during the Great War. He argued the need for a shift in the way we engage the British public on China, avoiding the deepest controversies and refocussing on issues which challenge views of China forged in the Cold War. Steve drew on some of the ways the Campaign was doing this, and the profound impact this could have on the Chinese community itself.

About Steve Lau

Steve Lau is chair of The Chinese in Britain Forum. Founded in 1996, the Forum works with and for the Chinese community to promote equality of opportunity, active citizenship and social cohesion. Steve also chairs the Strategic Partnership Board coordinating the Ensuring We Remember Campaign to establish a permanent memorial in the UK to the 96,000 volunteers of the Chinese Labour Corps.

An Account of Steve Lau's Talk

Steve Lau observed that amongst the 40,000 memorials to the Great War in the UK there is not a single one to the Chinese Labour Corps despite their vital contribution to the war effort, and the over two thousand who died in service. He spoke of Britain's promise after the war to remember those who had served, and called the routine omission or relegation of the Chinese Labour Corps to a footnote in history a historical injustice that needed to be addressed. He spoke of what can be learnt from this Campaign. "You have to choose your battles," he commented.

Steve noted that there is, for better or for worse, a direct relationship

between how the British public perceive China and their view of the Chinese community in Britain; and conversely, how the public view the Chinese community in Britain impacts upon how they perceive China. Steve argued that a better understanding of China was only possible if the dominant narratives on China changed, given that on some issues those narratives did not reflect the reality in China. To challenge engrained misconceptions, he argued, was a waste of time and energy, citing the example of Tibet on which misrepresentations and historical inaccuracies are so strongly held that there is no possibility of a reasoned debate on the subject. He suggests that in order to promote a better understanding of China we draw a lesson from Deng Xiaoping's approach to developing relations with Japan at the start of the Open Door Policy, in which he suggested the more difficult issues be set aside and left for future generations to address. By not engaging on issues such as Tibet, Taiwan or Falungong we can focus our attention and energies on more productive dialogue.

The effects of such an approach were illustrated with reference to the 'Ensuring We Remember' campaign. Steve observed that the most common reaction by members of the British public when they learn that 96,000 Chinese volunteers came to Britain's assistance during the First World War is to exclaim, "Really?", and suggested we should welcome such a reaction because it indicates that a person's understanding of China had been challenged, and provides the opportunity to present a more nuanced understanding of China.

At the same time Steve suggested that the Campaign's impact upon the Chinese community may be just as profound. The Campaign has been more than a rallying point, for not only has it brought together the largest ever coalition of Chinese organisations in Britain, but the hidden history it reveals denies those who would exclude or marginalise the British Chinese. This was highlighted as being of great importance because communities which are excluded or marginalised are denied the foundations on which civic pride and participation are based.

Steve finished by summarising some of the ways the campaign was building new foundations for civic pride and increased participation in national life by

the Chinese in Britain:

- For the first time the Chinese community in Britain will be taking a pro-active rather than re-active step in engaging with mainstream society in search for a fair and equitable place within British society.
- For the first time in its history the focus of the community's involvement in British society will move away from colonialism and of being guests, to a community that can take pride and confidence in its contribution and sacrifice to and for Britain.
- For the first time, the Chinese in Britain will have a cultural reference point that embeds them within a historical Britain: their history will no longer begin with post Second World War migration.
- For the first time British born Chinese children will have a shared heritage with their peers, inspiring a confidence and self-esteem from which their rightful assertion to be British Chinese is not accompanied by feeling the need to justify being one or the other.
- For the first time, the place and belonging of British Chinese in British society will stretch beyond living memory, and when they speak of their heritage it will no longer necessarily be a reference to far off places in East and Southeast Asia.



Steve Lau and Graham Perry

PROFESSOR JUDE HOWELL, LSE

Professor Jude Howell began by asking if we still need to make the effort to understand China. China is becoming much more complex, differentiated and unequal making it harder to understand but even more important to make the effort to understand. She asked a series of questions to initiate discussion regarding social, political and economic changes in China. We cannot predict the future because there are so many possible scenarios but there is still a need for us to try to understand China.



Professor Jude Howell

About Professor Jude Howell

Jude Howell is Professor of International Development with the Department of International Development at the LSE. Between 2003 and 2010 she was Director of the LSE Centre for Civil Society. She is currently Director of the ESRC Research Programme on Non-Governmental Public Action, and Series Editor of the Palgrave Press book series on Non-Governmental Public Action. Prior to working at the LSE, she was governance team leader at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Her research interests include: civil society and development; trade unionism and labour organising in China; Chinese development model and aid. Recent publications include, *Global*

Matters for Non-Governmental Public Action (Editor), (Palgrave Press, 2012); NGOs and Social Development: a Comparative Study (co-edited with Peng Xizhe and Wang Chuanlan), (Fudan University Press, 2012).

An Account of Professor Jude Howell's Talk

Professor Jude Howell began by asking if there were still myths and preconceptions about China. Or perhaps we do not need to make the effort to understand China anymore? So many young people are going abroad to study. Dr Joseph Needham underlined the importance of making known the Chinese point of view. China is becoming much more complex, differentiated, and with rapid economic growth, more unequal. China has become much more diverse over the last 30 years – diversification of classes, generations, across regions, making it harder to postulate a Chinese view. Whose views of China are we looking at? There is no longer just one view. It is harder to understand China now but more important to make the effort to understand. Is there a civil society? People say there is no civil society in China, that the government controls everything, but this is not correct. There are NGOs on various issues, such as the environment and women's issues.

Is the government authoritarian? There is a loosening up in the political system, with consultation, public hearings, some involvement in budgeting. We need to understand why the government has adopted these measures and where they are going.

Professor Howell then spoke of the changing nature of the Chinese Communist Party. How does it survive? It is very adaptive and experimental, unlike the Soviet Union. Its origins go back to the revolutionary struggle. Are these changes just about short-term survival or leading to a very new way of governing?

Is China still communist? Is this a misnomer? What is left of communism today? Is it just the name 'Communist Party'? If it is not communist, what is it? Is it a variety of capitalism, or a capitalist version of communism?

There is still a Cold War mentality in US-China scholarship, so China's

engagement in Africa and other low-income countries means China is seen as a twenty-first century neo-colonialist. Chinese ambassadors in Africa are increasingly adept at challenging these perceptions, arguing it is about mutual benefit, friendship, solidarity, with decades of history behind it. "We need to understand these narratives," she said.

And what of future predictions? Understanding China is important for understanding the future. There is a Cold War assumption that surely China must be heading towards democratisation. There are real unknowables. We cannot predict with any confidence.

The Communist Party school has been carefully studying the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, determined it will not happen in China. The party does fear collapse. If the Chinese Communist Party collapsed, what would replace it? Would there be civil war? External war? Would the country break up? There are many scenarios and it is difficult to predict.

In conclusion, Professor Howell asserted that it is very important to try to understand the contours of social, political and economic change in China, what China might look like in 50 years' time. There is still a need for understanding and effort.

GRAHAM PERRY, FORMER SACU VICE CHAIR

Graham Perry spoke on the themes of China today: stability, prosperity, human rights and the rule of law. China is becoming a more pluralistic society with a party that is becoming accountable to the people. China's human rights weaknesses are being addressed, and it is embracing the rule of law.

About Graham Perry

Graham Perry first visited China as a twenty-year-old student in 1965 when China was in the grip of the Socialist Education movement prior to the Cultural Revolution. He returned to the UK and formed the Cambridge branch of SACU. He has since made more than 100 visits as a businessman and latterly as an Arbitrator with the CIETAC, the China International Trade Arbitration Commission. He is son of Jack Perry of the 48 Group of businessmen who pioneered business with the new PRC. His brother Stephen Perry is current Chairman of the 48 Group Club. He is also visiting Professor at the University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, and a past Vice-Chair of SACU. He speaks regularly on China.

An Account of Graham Perry's Talk

The themes of China today are stability, prosperity, human rights and the rule of law. In 1976, a few days after the arrest of the Gang of Four, there was a film show at the Chinese Embassy. Afterwards the Ambassador came forward and said how happy he was that night. He told a very different story about the Cultural Revolution. The official spokespersons had 'pulled the wool over our eyes' about China and the Cultural Revolution. It was a dark disaster for China. Maybe it was intended to be very different, but the outcome set China back.

Deng Xiaoping said, "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice." Where do we begin to understand China today? Two words

have stood out in relation to China's wants: stability and prosperity. But stability not at the expense of accountability. China does not want a repeat of the Cultural Revolution or 1989



[Tiananmen Square

protests]. China is moving towards a much more pluralistic society. China wants to have a society at ease with itself whilst it sets about the task of turning into a top, powerful economic state bringing as much prosperity to as many people as possible. For many people, its market reforms are not communism. In that sense, China is in uncharted waters.

The role of the party has to be accepted by the people, and it is to a large extent. Xi Jinping should be given credit for recognizing that the party is at risk unless it is accountable. This has become the lynchpin of his presidency. He has insisted that the relationship between the party and the people must be repaired. If the people are more critical than ever before, then so be it. This is difficult for us to understand as we have always thought of China as autocratic. China is posing new questions about democracy. Mr Perry asserted that China would never embrace the two-party system and did not accept the UK or US political system were appropriate to China.

Mr Perry recommended Xi Jinping's newly published book, *The Governance of China*, for President Xi's vision of the future of China. [*The Governance of China* is a compilation of excerpts and summaries of major speeches, talks, interviews and correspondence made by President Xi (2015).]

As for human rights, critics are mainly from USA and Britain. However in the UK it took almost 100 years after the 1832 Reform Act before all adults were entitled to vote [1928]. In USA, the Declaration of Independence, 1776, stated "all men are created equal", but not women or blacks: the last qualification on the right of all adults to vote was not lifted [in some Southern states]

until 1965. The People's Republic of China is only 65 years old. There are weaknesses in China's human rights but they are being addressed.

China is embracing the rule of law. The Chinese government is looking at how the rule of law works in the UK. Will the party be able to impose its will on judges? No, they say the judiciary will be independent. In conclusion, things of considerable significance are happening in China now. The question for us is how to be a 'critical friend' of China.



Graham Perry



*Dirk Nimmegeers, Belgium-China Association Representative,
makes a point from the floor*



*Andrew Hicks, SACU Council Member,
makes a point from the floor*

IN ATTENDANCE

Embassy of the People's Republic of China

HE Ambassador Liu Xiaoming
Minister Counsellor Xiang Xiaowei
Second Secretary Chen Lekang
Mr. Ma Yongchao
Shao Zheng Counsellor
Counsellor Shao Zheng

Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

Mr. Song Jingwu Vice President, European Department
Ms. Zhang Ruoning Deputy Director, European Department
Ms. Hao Xiaosong Deputy Division Director, European Department
Ms. Sun Chi, Project Officer, European Department
Ms. Wang Fan, Project Officer, European Department

Peking University

Professor Sun Hua (China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies)
Wang Fan (China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies)

Oundle School

Ms. Anabelle Barker, Joint SACU/China Centre for Edgar Snow Studies Oundle
School Essay prize winner
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Hua Yan, Head of Chinese
Shunying Ge, Hanban Teacher, Chinese Department

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Oscar Wright
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Zhongyi Huang
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in past; 1971 tour]

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Judith Meadows
Zhenzhong Mu
Siv Oftedal

J Penders
Wenlan Peng (Chair, Meridian Society)
Richard Phillips
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Tina Redshaw British Consul-General
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Robert Temple, Author of "The Genius of China" and associate of Joseph
Needham. Chairman of The History of Chinese Science and Culture Foundation.
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Acknowledgements

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Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding Ltd.
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