

A conversation with Paul Haenle on April 22, 2014

Participants

- Paul Haenle – Director, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, part of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- Elie Hassenfeld – Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, GiveWell

Note: This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Mr. Haenle.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Paul Haenle of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy to better understand opportunities to engage in policy advocacy outside the United States. The conversation focused on the work of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing.

The establishment of Carnegie's international presence

Around 2006, Jessica Matthews, President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (hereafter, Carnegie), decided that for the Carnegie Endowment to remain relevant in today's more globally interconnected world, the organization would need to become a global think tank and gain an international presence and perspective. The prior success of the Carnegie Moscow Center played a key part in the decision to expand further.

In 2006, Carnegie opened the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, followed in 2007 by Carnegie Europe in Brussels. Around this same time, Carnegie established a partnership in China with the China Reform Forum, a think tank of the Central Party School in Beijing. Carnegie also plans to open a new office in India soon. (A summary of GiveWell's conversation with Milan Vaishnav of Carnegie's India office is here: <http://files.givewell.org/files/conversations/Vaishnav%202-27-14.pdf>.) These centers are intended to give Carnegie an active and engaged presence in strategically important world capitals, to bring local scholars into the organization and to foster rich international dialogue.

When Mr. Haenle first joined Carnegie in China, Carnegie was considering partnering with a think tank at a university. In China, university campuses provide the best environment for vigorous, wide-ranging debate. Doug Paal, Vice President for Studies at Carnegie, and Yan Xuetong, Director of the Institute of International Studies at Tsinghua University, arranged for Carnegie to partner with Tsinghua University (THU). Many of China's top leaders, such as Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, attended THU. The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy was established at THU in 2010.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center gives Carnegie a platform for direct engagement with Chinese experts, scholars, and government officials, and equally, provides Tsinghua with

a platform for direct engagement with international experts, scholars, and former policymakers. Its mission is, through collaborative dialogue and research, to help China and the international community work together to produce solutions to international issues. The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center has three main goals:

- 1) Provide a platform for open communication and robust dialogue between China and the international community.
- 2) Improve China's and the international community's understanding of one another.
- 3) Use this enhanced understanding to identify constructive solutions to common international challenges and to produce concrete ideas and recommendations which benefit from both a Chinese and international perspective.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center focuses on global issues that China is well-positioned to help make progress on, such as:

- Nonproliferation and arms control
- Climate change and energy
- Global economic issues
- China's diplomatic relations
- Global and regional security challenges

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center also works on relations between China and the US, EU, Africa, and Latin America.

Carnegie is particularly well positioned to make contributions to China-US relations, which are of concern to the whole international community. In this context, Carnegie is working to develop the specific details of what Xi Jinping has described as a “new type of great power relationship” between the US and China.

Scholars at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center

Carnegie employs nine Resident Scholars from THU (8 Chinese, 1 American). In addition to teaching and conducting research for THU, these scholars run research programs for the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center involving dialogue, roundtables, and seminars. These are important for building trust and understanding between Chinese and international scholars and experts.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center also employs two full-time Chinese Resident Scholars from outside of Tsinghua University. One focuses on environmental and energy issues, particularly China's participation in global oil markets. Another focuses on China's impact on global economic and business issues. Finally, Carnegie's Director also runs a research program.

Carnegie also has a number of non-Resident scholars. Some are based in Beijing. Some are based abroad in Washington, D.C., Europe, and elsewhere but visit THU for extended periods to participate in the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center's work.

China's emerging international role

In past decades, China's role in global issues has been limited. China is now beginning to focus significant attention on foreign policy and its role in the world community. Chinese leaders, experts, and scholars are trying to better understand the rest of the world, particularly areas in which China has a presence (China's investment in African and Latin American resources are two examples). The international community is also trying to better understand China.

Developing China's role in the international community is a long-term project and direct results of Carnegie's work may not be apparent for several decades. The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center's work assisting with China's emergence and developing China's role in the international community is essential right now. As China becomes more active on the international stage and takes a greater role in solving critical global issues, the center's work will become more and more vital. The international community needs to, and will need to, better understand China's perspective on global issues in order to work with China to resolve them. As the world becomes increasingly globalized and China rises, China and the international community will need to work collaboratively on a growing number of critical challenges, and thus constructive dialogue and research, which enhances their mutual understanding and trust, will be ever more important and necessary.

Senior Chinese officials and scholars have told Mr. Haenle that the Chinese side has recognized the benefit that Carnegie's platform and network of scholars provides to China. Carnegie has also received positive feedback on its work from EU and US government officials.

Building trust and dialogue

In China, effective dialogue requires a foundation of trust. Building trust and understanding is central to Carnegie's work in China. Carnegie provides a platform for experts, scholars, and thinkers to discuss important issues in a candid and in-depth way, with the aim of bridging gaps between China and the international community on issues where they diverge.

In the past, many official channels of communication between China and the international community have been ineffective. While serving in the US government, Mr. Haenle often found dialogue with Chinese officials to be stilted and constrained to talking points, which did not produce effective communication. It is typical for delegates from the US or EU to come to China for only one or two days to participate in conferences featuring speeches from both the delegates and Chinese officials. Mr. Haenle has participated in such events in the past. Occasionally, single scholars from the US or EU visit a think tank or university research center in China for 3-6 months at a time. These one-off visits are valuable, but tend to be ad hoc and do not help build strong, long-term relationships.

Building strong relationships requires a sustained effort and time commitment. Carnegie aims to provide a platform for developing such relationships.

Carnegie also hosts a week-long “Distinguished Speakers Program” which allows former senior officials from the US and EU to engage with Chinese officials, scholars, students, media, and business executives. Central to this Program is its comprehensive nature—it provides former senior officials from the international community a diverse agenda of opportunities to engage with a range of Chinese perspectives. The program also takes international experts inside of China—to central and western cities which are more reflective of China’s state of development and different from cosmopolitan east coast cities.

Publication of Chinese writing

Carnegie promotes the publication of Chinese scholarly writing, and helps to disseminate Chinese ideas into the international dialogue by translating, editing, and publishing Chinese commentaries on Carnegie’s international website, which is important for improving understanding of Chinese ideas in the international community.

Western scholarly writing tends to be structured linearly, making a claim and then providing evidence. Chinese scholars tend to be less linear and have a different way of thinking through problems. This can present a challenge when sharing Chinese ideas with the international community. Carnegie brings international and Chinese scholars together to better understand each other and to find effective ways to present Chinese ideas to an international audience.

Carnegie-Tsinghua scholars’ ideas and publications have translated into the June US-China Sunnylands summit and contributed to transformative discussions on greater cooperation between the US and China on North Korea. When North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, scholars wrote editorials and organized discussions in Beijing and Washington to explore ideas for enhancing dialogue and cooperation on the North Korea issue. Carnegie received feedback that these publications were read by the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, the U.S. Secretary of State, and the Asia team preparing Obama for his meeting with Xi, where the leaders agreed North Korea was an area for enhanced cooperation.

Positive results of Carnegie’s work

Carnegie’s Chinese scholars have a good relationship with the Chinese government and are often called upon by the government for briefing or advice. Mr. Haenle and other Carnegie scholars also maintain a number of contacts in the US government. Carnegie is therefore able to serve as an unofficial communication channel between China and the US (as well the EU and Russia). The timely communication of Chinese sentiments and views can help resolve misunderstandings and achieve more informed policy outcomes in the US.

For example, when North Korea sunk a South Korean ship, Mr. Haenle was able to call upon Chinese scholars focused on North Korea to ask about the Chinese perspective on the event and to share the US's perspective. Through this collaborative approach, US and Chinese experts can determine how to effectively engage their respective governments to achieve positive outcomes. Such interactions rely on the relationships built by Carnegie and would not have been possible from Mr. Haenle's previous position at the White House.

Carnegie-hosted roundtables have allowed Chinese experts to express their concerns to visiting US officials. Some of these discussions have led directly to senior US officials including statements about these concerns in speeches given as soon as a week later.

In 2011, a scholar at THU approached Carnegie for financial support for a national-level meeting on the evolution of China's foreign policy. This meeting had been occurring annually for ten years and was to be hosted that year by THU. Previously, the conference had included only Chinese scholars and experts, but Carnegie persuaded the organizers to allow an equal number of international experts to attend for the first time.

One scholar from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) who spent a week at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center engaging with Chinese experts and government officials was selected by President Obama to become Senior Director for Defense and Security on the National Security Council, one week after his visit to Carnegie-Tsinghua. He brought his comprehensive experiences and perspectives from China with him to the White House. Another Middle East expert hosted by the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center was arranged a discussion with China's chief Middle East envoy one day before the envoy left on a week-long visit to the region. Carnegie-Tsinghua was able to shape and impact the envoy's message and perspective ahead of his important trip.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center hosts recurrent US congressional delegations to China, including most recently the US House Majority Leader, and has become a critical resource for improve understanding and communication between Congress and China.

Funding and budget

The annual budget of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center is currently a little less than \$2 million.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center was initially funded by a substantial three-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (a grantmaking organization separate from the Carnegie Endowment), who became interested in the Carnegie Endowment's work after talking with Jessica Matthews. Mr. Haenle joined Carnegie with two years of this grant remaining. The Carnegie Corporation of New York extended the grant by three more years after one of their program officers visited THU and was impressed and optimistic about Carnegie's work. The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center also receives funding from embassies in Beijing, whose missions and objectives align closely with the Center's, and

from private donors with an interest in US-China relations. Carnegie is currently in the early stages of determining how to fund future work when the CCNY grant expires. Given the collaborative nature of its work, the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center hopes for Chinese as well as international funding.

About 50% of the Carnegie Endowment's operating budget comes from its original endowment. Some of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center's funding comes from this endowment.

The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center ultimately aims to have ten Chinese scholars and ten international scholars in residence, including US, European, Russian, and Middle-Eastern experts. The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center's budget would need to expand in order to accommodate these scholars.

Other think tanks in China

Carnegie, which was founded as a foreign policy think tank, is currently the only international think tank in China with a foreign policy focus.

The only other foreign think tank with a presence in China is the Brookings Institution, which also has a platform at THU. The Brookings Institution places more focus on domestic economics and demographics issues than Carnegie does. The Brookings Institution has partnered with THU's Public Policy and Management School while Carnegie has partnered with the International Relations Institute. Carnegie works with the Brookings Institution on some overlapping issues, such as climate change and some economic issues.

There are Chinese think tanks that focus on both foreign and domestic issues. Government ministries oversee Chinese think tanks. For example, the Chinese Institute for International Studies receives its agenda and funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Government ministries also oversee the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese Institute for Contemporary and International Relations.

Universities in China fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is less likely to get involved in specific issues Carnegie works on, focusing instead on Carnegie's structural role in partnership with a university. Universities also historically have much more liberal environments, conducive to intellectual and scholarly debate and discussion. Carnegie is therefore able to have a more active and wide-ranging discussion than other Chinese think tanks, which have much more day-to-day government involvement.

Many international universities are involved in a range of projects in China, including facilitating student exchanges, hosting scholars for short-term stays, and development work.

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