

Interview: UTS:ACRI Director James Laurenceson speaks with the Global Times 悉尼科技大学澳中关系研究院院长罗震接受环球时报采访

James Laurenceson (罗震)

December 1 2021 (2021年12月1日)

This interview appeared in the *Global Times* on December 1 2021. This transcript includes a Simplified Chinese translation by Jun Wang, NAATI Level 3 translator (NAATI ID: 80136).

本采访于2021年12月1日发表于环球时报。本文由 Jun Lucius Wang (NAATI三级翻译员; NAATI ID: 80136) 翻译。

Editor's Note:

According to a recent report by the Australia-China Relations Institute of the University of Technology Sydney, the value of 12 Australian exports to China affected by China-Australia dispute fell by \$17.3 billion in the first nine months of this year compared with the 2019 figures. During the same period, the value of US exports of the same commodities increased by \$6.3 billion. Australia is serving as an anti-China vanguard for the US, but Washington has become the biggest beneficiary of the China-Australia dispute. Why has Australia chosen this path? Will the Morrison administration adjust its China policy? *Global Times* reporters Yu Jincui and Wang Wenwen interviewed James Laurenceson, Director of the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney, via email.

编者按:

悉尼科技大学澳中关系研究院近期发布的一份报告指出，今年前9个月，受中澳紧张关系影响，12种澳大利亚商品对华出口总额较2019年减少了173亿美元。同一时期，美国同等商品的对华出口总额增长了63亿美元。澳大利亚充当了美国的反华急先锋，而华盛顿却成为了中澳关系恶化的最大受益者。澳大利亚为何走上了这条道路？莫里森政府是否会调整其对华政策？环球时报记者于金翠和王雯雯就此通过邮件采访了悉尼科技大学澳中关系研究院院长詹姆斯·劳伦森（James Laurenceson，中文名罗震）。

Global Times: In your opinion, how will the Australian business community view those figures? What impact will they have on Australia's future diplomacy with the US and China?

环球时报：您认为澳大利亚商会会如何看待这些数字？这种情况会对未来澳大利亚同美国以及和中国的外交关系产生怎样的影响？

James Laurenceson: The figures won't surprise business leaders in the slightest. Indeed, they've been foreshadowing this as an entirely predictable outcome for more than a year, as have academics like myself. But this is not to say that business leaders will lobby the Australian government to make substantive changes to its foreign policy. They won't. What they are wanting is an honest assessment by Canberra of the costs and recognition by the government of who is bearing these costs - Australian businesses and Australian businesses alone. And for Canberra to think harder about how they might be better supported.

For Australian producers, watching American competitors pick up their lost sales in China, hearing the Morrison administration repeat ad nauseam the line that the US stands ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with Australia is a frustrating experience. It must also be said that many Australian businesses are very disappointed by Beijing. After investing years of goodwill and resources into building relationships with China, they found these efforts were undone not by any mistakes they themselves made or because Chinese importers no longer wanted their goods, but rather by the political dispute between Beijing and Canberra. Sadly, this experience will linger in the minds of Australian businesses for a long time to come. In my view, the Morrison administration’s diplomatic approach toward China is locked in. Some reasonable public policy moves in the past, like banning foreign political donations and tightening up foreign interference laws, are now being overlaid with rhetoric and interventions that are firmly focused on domestic politics and amplifying threat perceptions of China among the general public. The good news is that this bald political strategy is fairly widely recognized. This isn’t to say that China doesn’t present genuine challenges to Australia’s interests. Rather, the productive way to respond isn’t the way being adopted. Meanwhile, there’s little evidence of a course correction in Beijing either, making it easy for China hawks in Australia to claim they were right about China all along. As usual, it’s individuals and businesses in Australia and China that are suffering from the political fallout.

罗震: 澳大利亚的商界领袖根本不会对这些数字感到吃惊。一年多以来, 他们一直都很清楚, 这是必然的结果, 包括我在内的学术界也有相同看法。但这并不意味着商界领袖会游说澳大利亚政府针对其对华政策做出实质性改变, 他们不会这样做。他们所希望的是堪培拉能够实事求是地评估造成的损失, 并且认识到是澳大利亚的商界在独自承受着这些损失。他们也希望政府能更认真地思考该如何更好得为澳大利亚企业提供支持。

对于澳大利亚的生产商来说, 看着美国竞争者抢走自己丢了的对华销售份额, 听着莫里森政府不断重复那套令人作呕的说辞, 也就是美国与澳大利亚‘肩并肩’站在一起, 真会让人相当恼火。我还必须指出的一点是, 许多澳大利亚企业对北京也倍感失望。他们多年来不断释放善意并投入资源以发展对华关系, 到头来却发现只是竹篮打水。其原因不是他们自己做错了, 也不是中国进口商不再需要他们的商品, 而是北京和堪培拉之间的政治纷争。令人遗憾的是, 这样的经历会在很长时间内成为澳大利亚企业挥之不去的记忆。在我看来, 莫里森政府的对华外交策略已经走进了死胡同。过去的一些合理的公共政策措施, 比如禁止外国政治献金和收紧针对外国干预的法律等, 如今已经黯然失色, 取而代之的是一些完全从国内政治的角度出发的、以在公众面前大肆渲染中国威胁论为目的的论调和干预措施。好消息是, 这种露骨的政治策略得到了相当广泛的认知。我并不是说中国没有对澳大利亚的利益构成切实威胁, 而是说现有的做法不是有效的应对手段。同时, 没有任何迹象表明北京会改弦易辙。这使得澳大利亚的对华强硬派更为笃定地表示自己对中国看法自始至终都是正确的。最终, 为政治后果买单的还是澳大利亚和中国的个人和企业。

Global Times: There is a view on media recently saying that the economic losses that a worsening China-Australia relationship has brought to Australia are much smaller than many have assumed and Australia’s resilience suggests that decoupling from China won’t bring serious consequences. How do you view this point?

环球时报: 近期媒体中有一种观点认为, 中澳关系恶化对澳大利亚带来的经济损失远不及许多人预想的那样大。澳大利亚的这种韧性表明与中国脱钩并不会带来严重后果。您对此怎么看?

James Laurenceson: It’s certainly true that I think Beijing miscalculated the costs to Australia of hitting goods like coal and barley. Global markets have simply redirected Australia’s commodities exports elsewhere. But there are three problems with the line that a trade decoupling from China won’t hurt.

First, at an aggregate level, two-way trade between Australia and China is at a record high. There hasn’t been any decoupling. This is because China continues to buy big-ticket Australian exports like iron ore, as well as extremely high global iron ore prices. But of course, over time this can change. Second, it ignores the serious costs to specific sectors, like wine. There is no global market that can easily redirect a high value-added, differentiated good like wine. As a result, the massive fall in wine sales to China has meant a large drop in exports overall. Third, future costs can rise for many reasons. For example, trade disruption could spread to services or the Chinese market could continue to outperform alternative markets that Australian exporters still have access to.

One final comment is that I don’t think the economic costs are actually the biggest cost. The fact is that at the moment Australia does not have a functioning high-level political relationship with the region’s dominant

power. This makes advancing not only Australian prosperity difficult but other objectives such as around national security too.

罗震: 我认为北京的确错误地估计了打击煤和大麦等商品进口对澳大利亚所造成的损失。全球其他地区的市场可以消化澳大利亚的这些商品。但对华贸易脱钩无害论存在三个问题。

首先, 总体来看, 澳中双边贸易额目前处于历史高位, 脱钩并没有发生。这是因为中国仍在继续从澳大利亚进口铁矿石等大宗商品, 还有一个原因是全球铁矿石价格极高。当然, 这会随着时间的推移发生变化。第二, 这一说法忽视了对华贸易脱钩对某些特定产业造成的严重打击, 比如葡萄酒业。葡萄酒这一类高附加值的差异化商品无法轻易找到替代市场, 因此葡萄酒对华出口额的断崖式下跌就意味着总体对华出口也会出现大幅下滑。第三, 未来, 出于种种原因, 损失可能还会增加。比如, 贸易受挫可能会波及服务业, 或者中国市场的表现持续优于澳大利亚的其他出口市场。

最后再补充一点。我不认为最大的损失是经济上的。目前的情况是, 澳大利亚和本地区主导性大国之间不存在有效的高层政治关系。这不仅阻碍了澳大利亚经济的进一步发展, 也使实现包括国家安全在内的其他目标变的非常困难。

Global Times: Recently, Western Australia and Victoria have both parted ways with the Australian federal government in seeking to rebuild trade ties with China. Why do you think they made such a decision?

环球时报: 近期, 西澳大利亚州和维多利亚州都选择不跟从澳大利亚联邦政府的路线, 而是寻求重建对华贸易关系。您认为他们为什么会做出这样的决定?

James Laurenceson: State governments, as is their constitutional responsibility, are focused on local jobs and service delivery such as education and health. The prosperity brought about by trade and investment supports that. Of course, they don't run foreign policy and everyone understands that. But the idea that states ought to utterly align themselves with the federal government on attitudes and approaches to China is, in my view, deeply flawed. This is particularly the case when the federal government is taking such a contentious approach to managing China relations. Having some diverse perspectives within the country is a strength of the Australian system, not a weakness.

罗震: 州政府及其宪法责任重点关注本地就业以及教育和卫生等服务的提供。贸易所带来的大量经济收入和投资支撑了这些领域的发展。当然, 外交政策不属于州政府的职能范畴, 这是众所周知的。但我认为, 各州应该在对华态度和策略上与联邦政府保持一致的这种说法很有问题, 特别是在联邦政府目前的对华关系处理方式极具争议的情况下尤为如此。国内存在多样化的观点是澳大利亚的制度优势, 而不是劣势。

Global Times: You once wrote, 'By standing up to China, Australia may end up standing alone.' Many countries are facing a situation that they rely on China for economy and the US for security, but they have been able to strike a balance. Why can't Australia do so? Is it because of the Morrison administration or other reasons? Who has benefited the most in Australia by making the country tilt more toward the US?

环球时报: 您曾经写道, '若继续与中国对抗, 澳大利亚可能最终会孤立无援' ('By standing up to China, Australia may end up standing alone.'). 许多国家在经济上依赖中国, 在安全上依赖美国, 但仍能够在二者之间找到平衡。为什么澳大利亚做不到? 是因为莫里森政府还是另有原因? 进一步向美国倾斜后, 澳大利亚国内谁是最大的受益者?

James Laurenceson: Since 2016, the national security establishment has come to dominate Canberra's thinking about China. China's own rhetoric and actions have fed into that, creating this toxic feedback loop. Still, I would also argue there was a major shift in the Morrison administration's approach in early 2020. Prior to then there was still an opportunity for well-crafted diplomacy on both sides to create low-cost off-ramps. In 2019, for example, Morrison rejected viewing the rise of China through the lens of ideological difference. But by this year he was embracing that precise framing.

罗震: 从2016年开始, 澳大利亚的国家安全部门逐渐主导了堪培拉的对华思路。中国自己的言论和行动也加剧了这种趋势, 这就形成了一种恶性循环。另外, 我认为莫里森政府的对华政策风向在2020年初发生了重大转变。

在那之前，双方通过合理外交手段以代价较小的方式打破政治僵局的可能性是存在的。比如，2019年，莫里森拒绝从意识形态差异的角度看待中国的崛起。但今年，他开始接受这样的叙事框架。

Global Times: After Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden had a virtual meeting on November 15, China-US relations have begun to ease to some extent. While at the same time, Morrison's approval ratings fell. In such a context, will Morrison ease his tone toward China? Or will being tough on China still be regarded as a 'trump card' for his re-election?

环球时报：中国国家主席习近平和美国总统乔·拜登11月15日举行视频会晤后，中美关系开始在一定程度上趋于缓和。与此同时，莫里森的支持率下跌。在这样的背景下，莫里森对中国的态度会软化吗？还是说对华强硬仍被视作他赢得下届大选的'王牌'？

James Laurenceson: I think the rhetoric that is now coming from Morrison and Defense Minister Peter Dutton makes it clear that they see talking up the China threat as a useful domestic political strategy. Whether this judgment will prove correct remains to be seen. Generally speaking, foreign policy issues don't tend to decide Australian elections. And drawing foreign relationships into cheap, domestic political point-scoring is unhelpful for longer-term national interests. Still, if they feel they are facing an election loss, it is possible that the Morrison administration will draw on whatever tools it thinks might help avert that outcome.

罗震：我认为从目前莫里森和国防部长彼得·达顿的言论来看，很明显他们仍将渲染中国威胁论视为有效的国内政治策略。这一判断正确与否目前还不清楚。总的来说，外交政策问题不太会对澳大利亚的大选结果起到决定性的作用，将对外关系作为廉价的、获取国内政治资本的手段也不利于长期的国家利益。但如果他们觉得在选举中胜算不大，那么莫里森政府有可能会利用任何其认为能够扭转选举结果的话题。

Global Times: Economy is one of the topics that concern voters the most. With the general election scheduled in May 2022, to what extent will the consequences that the chilly China-Australia relations have brought about, such as the decline in trade volume and decreasing number of foreign students, affect the election?

环球时报：经济是选民最关心的话题之一。澳大利亚下一届大选定于2022年5月举行。您认为中澳之间如履薄冰的关系所引发的后果，比如贸易额的下滑和留学生人数的减少，会对选举产生怎样的影响？

James Laurenceson: The economic effects of disrupted trade ties with China won't feature much in the election campaigning because overall trade values have, in fact, increased. There might be a negative impact in some localities that have been hit hard, like wine-producing regions. But these will be peripheral to issues that resonate across the country as a whole.

罗震：澳中贸易受挫造成的经济影响在大选中不会被过多关注，因为澳大利亚的总体贸易额实际上是有所增加的。在某些受打击较为严重的地区，比如葡萄酒产区，这可能会造成消极影响。但和澳大利亚面临的全国性话题相比，这些都是次要的。

Professor James Laurenceson is Director of the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney.

罗震教授为悉尼科技大学澳中关系研究院院长。