

## **Analysts say if Biden wins he'll likely unite allies against China, and that's good for Canada**

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VANCOUVER — A Joe Biden White House would benefit Canada as it grapples with mainland China's increasingly hostile foreign policy, analysts say.

Dan Ikenson, director of the Herbert A. Stiefel Centre for Trade Policy Studies at the Washington, D.C.-based Cato Institute, said Biden's stance on China and his desire to repair the international reputation of the United States will give Ottawa more leverage against Beijing.

“What Biden is likely to do is to recognize if we have problems with China the best way to handle those problems is to have as many allies as possible on board paddling in the same direction,” Ikenson said.

Canada's relations with mainland China have been in a downward spiral since the 2018 arrest of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver at the request of the United States.

Beijing has since punished Canadian imports to the country and arrested two Canadians in China on what observers say are bogus espionage charges. It has sentenced four other Canadians convicted of drug offences there to death.

Canada's relations with Washington have also seen better days, with the Trump administration forcing the rewriting of the North American Free Trade Agreement into a new deal. The U.S. also reimposed import taxes on Canadian aluminum last week, prompting \$3.8 billion in retaliatory tariffs from Ottawa.

But Biden would likely “mend fences” with Ottawa and other allies if elected, says Ikenson, adding strength to countering Beijing's foreign policy.

Such a strategy could include dropping the aluminum import taxes and working together with Canada on technology security issues, such as telecommunications and even apps such as TikTok, he said.

“We need to figure out a way to more clearly delineate technologies that are threatening to national security from those that are not,” he said. “That’s something I think can be achieved through coordination with the G7.”

Meanwhile, on Monday, Trump claimed that Biden’s stance on China is so weak that if he were to win the presidency this November Americans would be “forced” to learn “Chinese.”

But Ikenson said Biden and the Democrats have had a firm stance on China since the Obama administration. Democrats have also supported sanctions on Chinese Communist Party officials (CCP) in response to Beijing’s human rights abuses in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

During a Democratic primary debate this year, Biden said he’s spent more time with Chinese president Xi Jinping than any other world leader and called him a “thug.”

Meanwhile, Biden’s vice-presidential choice, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris, has spoken out against China’s human rights abuses, including penning a letter with another senator asking the Trump administration to take action on revelations of a forced-sterilization program of Muslims in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

A unified voice would better safeguard Canada’s interests when dealing with Beijing, agreed associate professor of global management at Ryerson University Sui Sui.

Sui told the Star if a more co-operative relationship existed between Canada and the U.S. when Meng was arrested in Vancouver, Washington may have employed more diplomatic actions to take responsibility for the arrest.

In turn, retaliation against Canada by China could have been mitigated, she said.

“The U.S. didn’t really deal with the media message with China well, so China’s mad at Canada,” Sui said.

She said co-operation between Ottawa and Washington could still work in getting the two Canadians detained on espionage charges, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, released.

Comments made by Trump shortly after Meng’s arrest suggesting the U.S. was open to negotiating for her release likely made the situation worse for the two men, Sui said.

Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, a University of Ottawa professor and former civil servant assigned to Canada-China relations, said Biden would help Canada immensely if he kept up pressure on Beijing to reform business practices in China.

McCuaig-Johnston said trade negotiations between the U.S. and China were supposed to address business practices in mainland China, such as forcing companies to share their technology to get access to the Chinese market.

But, though the deal promised an action on such issues, there was no clear path to enforcement.

“I think that Biden could get back to the business of getting China to focus on its business practices,” she said. “That’s what would really help American companies doing business in China and at the same time would help Canadian companies.”

McCuaig-Johnston said Biden would offer a stable and rational approach to relations with Beijing.

Ikenson, meanwhile, said a tougher stance on China is going to continue from U.S. leaders no matter who wins in November. But he said Biden’s approach will likely be most effective.

“I think every freedom loving, democracy loving humanist loving democracy in the world should see any alternative to Donald Trump as progress,” Ikenson said.