

CAN CANADA AND CHINA STILL LEARN FROM EACH OTHER? BALANCING RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

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The future of the relationship between Canada and China is back in the news — but what does that mean for Canadian researchers who have been warned about too-close ties to Beijing?

The release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and the resolution of the U.S.-based case against Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou has resolved one tension point between Canada and the emerging super power.

In this webinar, we will explore how international research partnerships have become tangled in the complex web of national security and economic competitiveness. We will ask Canadian academics who have done work with China and who those who understand the Canada-China relationship to share their insights and thoughts on what comes next when academic interests and geopolitics collide. The session will operate under Chatham House Rules to allow for frank, open discussion.

The Background

The panel will explore the ramifications of an outreach program launched by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in April 2020.

At the time, CSIS warned Canadian universities and researchers to be on alert for international espionage and foreign interference targeting their research and data— from partnerships that could compromise intellectual property to the possible presence of foreign agents in labs. CSIS then identified research areas that may be considered sensitive or dual-use, which included quantum computing, advanced electronics and engineering, vaccines, chemistry and artificial intelligence.

In May 2021, Alberta ordered its four major universities to suspend the pursuit of any new or renewed partnerships linked to China. It also asked them to undertake a thorough review of their institutions' relationships with any potentially linked entities.

In July 2021, the Canadian government rolled out new national security guidelines for research partnerships and risk assessment protocols for universities applying for additional funding through the Natural Sciences and

Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Alliance Grants Program.

The actions by CSIS and Canadian governments have raised important questions about academic freedom, openness and competitiveness. They have also prompted examination of the effects on the private sector, which relies on public-private collaboration to fuel innovation and growth.

Supporters of academic freedom are worrying about the effect of undermining legitimate partnerships as well as an open and collaborative research environment. However, there are growing concerns and calls for developing a new strategy for securing national research.

Webinar panelists and commentators will provide insights on:

- How has the release of the “two Michaels” and the return of Meng Wanzhou affected the Canada-China relationship?
- Is national security a threat to academic freedom or vice versa?
- How do we strike the right balance between Canada’s national security obligations and the needs of researchers to engage with partners around the world?
- Can academic research and international collaboration be conducted outside of geopolitical considerations?
- Are there other examples we can learn from? Other successful collaborations by academics while national geopolitics would suggest otherwise?
- Are there “best practices” for universities and researchers who conduct research partnerships with the private sector and international partners to follow?

Date: Monday, October 18, 2021

Time: 9:00 am PST/ 12:00 pm EST

Webinar: Log-in details will be e-mailed a couple days before the webinar

CPD: This event qualifies for 1.5 CPD credits

Panelists:

Paul Evans

HSBC Professor of Asian Research

School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia

Gordon Houlden

Jie Cheng

Associate Professor

Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia

Christopher Parsons

Director Emeritus of the China Institute Professor of
Political Science
University of Alberta

Commentators:

Victor V. Ramraj

**Professor, Director of the Centre for Asia Pacific
Initiatives**
University of Victoria

Opening Remarks:

Carol Liao

Director of the Centre for Business Law
Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British
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