

Country Summary: People's Republic of China

Note: the PRC's FI activities specific to elections have been addressed in other requests by the Commission.

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- **Summary may be incomplete:** *The summary summarizes some, but not necessarily all, the intelligence information on this topic that is available to the Government of Canada's national security and intelligence community. For example, it only contains relevant information that can be appropriately sanitized for public release.*
- **Summary does not indicate time of collection:** *This summary does not indicate, unless expressly stated, when the summarized information was collected or obtained. This information was collected and analyzed over a period of time, which may/may not have been available to decision makers across the Government of Canada during the writ-period. As such, for example, it should not be assumed that the information was collected close in time to the events being described.*
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- **Summary does not analyze information:** *This document is a summary of intelligence; it is not an analysis of the overall import, meaning, or strength of intelligence.*

The Commission has been provided with all relevant intelligence and assessments, which indicates information on reliability and corroboration of the information contained therein.

WHAT

This summary has as its focus activities related to foreign interference related to elections and democratic institutions, per the mandate of the Commission. It does not address the full range of foreign interference activities observed in Canada, including transnational repression.

While all states pursue legitimate diplomatic activities to influence other countries, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is engaged in a number of activities in Canada that go beyond normal diplomatic activity, and as such, constitute foreign interference (FI). Relevant to the work of the Commission for the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, the PRC was engaged in FI activities related to the 43rd and 44th General Elections. The resources that the PRC expends on these activities exceed those of other states.

Governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the PRC uses a range of tools and actors (including Canada-based proxy agents¹) to engage in FI activities in Canada. PRC FI activities are wide-ranging, and include: the monitoring and transnational repression² of diaspora communities; activities meant to impact the outcomes of Canadian democratic processes; and clandestinely or deceptively shaping narratives in support of PRC strategic objectives and/or counter policies that they believe threaten PRC interests.

The PRC directs FI activities against individuals or processes ranging from the local level to the federal level, as well as Canada's Indigenous communities. The PRC is agnostic in terms of political parties they direct these FI activities against.

WHY

The PRC uses a wide range of both CCP (i.e., the United Front Work Department and state entities (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), as well as Canadian and Canada-based proxy agents, to engage in foreign interference activities. This includes some PRC officials in Canada.

Key party-state bodies known for their involvement in FI activities in Canada include the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD is a department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that is tasked with collecting intelligence and engaging in foreign interference. Internationally, the UFWD attempts to control and influence the PRC diaspora living in other countries, shape international opinions, and influence politicians to support the Chinese government's policies. It has a budget in the billions for its global operations. The state Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (which was absorbed by the UFWD in 2018), as well as the Ministry of State Security (MSS), and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS),

¹ Proxy: For the purpose of this summary, a proxy is a specific individual who takes explicit and/or implicit direction from a foreign state while obfuscating the link between influence activities and a foreign state. Proxy agents are witting participants in furthering the objective of the foreign state in specific circumstances. A proxy is a Canada-based individual (Canadian citizen, Canadian Permanent Resident, etc.) who may/may not belong to a specific diaspora community.

² Transnational Repression: For the purpose of this summary, transnational repression occurs when a government reaches across national borders, to intimidate, silence, or harm an exile, refugee, or member of diaspora who they perceive as a threat and have a political incentive to control.

are also involved in FI. The MSS and the MPS operate covertly internationally and remotely from the PRC.

Belonging to an organization with links to the PRC, such as those affiliated with the CCP's United Front system, does not amount in and of itself to foreign interference or pose a threat to Canada's national security. However, the PRC uses a whole of society approach that blurs the distinction between legitimate activity (influence) and clandestine, deceptive activity (interference). The PRC uses the United Front system to engage in clandestine, deceptive, and threatening activity around the world, often by leveraging influence and exerting control over some diaspora communities.

WHO

The PRC has increased efforts to influence members of Chinese diaspora communities around the world. This is especially true for members of these communities who hold views the PRC considers particularly threatening: the Falun Gong, Uyghurs, Tibetans, supporters of Taiwanese independence, and PRC pro-democracy advocates – a set of issues collectively referred to by the PRC as the Five Poisons. Transnational repression, which includes harassment and other threats, is most often directed at individuals affiliated with – or believed to be affiliated with – those Five Poison groups.

The PRC has blurred the distinction between PRC citizens living abroad and citizens of foreign states of Chinese heritage. The PRC seeks to position itself as the 'voice' of all Chinese people around the world, regardless of citizenship, or the disparate views of the members of the broader diaspora communities themselves. As such, the PRC seeks to ensure public narratives and policies in Canada are either complementary to, or reflect those of the PRC, especially with respect to PRC's human rights record, its territorial claims or any other matter it assesses as a threat to its stability. The PRC has enacted a suite of national security laws that compel action by its citizens and entities, including those overseas.

The PRC targets individuals it perceives as having status or influence in a particular community or within broader Canadian society, including community and business leaders, academics, current and former elected officials at all levels of government, and members of the media (online and traditional).

HOW

Often described as persistent and patient, the PRC takes a long-term approach to influence operations. The PRC invests in developing relationships – using both overt and legitimate, and covert and deceptive – means to build cooperation over time.

The PRC uses incentives given directly to a person or indirectly to those close to them, and can include prestigious invitations to important cultural or national events (often in the PRC), expense paid trips to the PRC, preferential business opportunities or incentives, expedited visa access, and political support (including financial support). Conversely, disincentives can include denial of travel visas (to include exit bans on family residing in the PRC), harassment and intimidation (including family members in the PRC), economic coercion (e.g., re-directing tourist groups, pressuring advertisers to withdraw from a media outlet, manipulating import/export of perishable goods to prevent timely sale), and community isolation.

The PRC uses its control and influence over Chinese language media (e.g., newspapers, radio stations) and social media applications (e.g., WeChat) as a means of asserting influence over the Chinese diaspora. The PRC promotes pro-PRC narratives, spreads disinformation³, and guides public discourse on PRC-related issues, while minimizing or suppressing and at times censoring content it deems 'anti-China'.

³ Disinformation: For the purpose of this summary, disinformation is when false or modified information (including the use of truths and half-truths) is knowingly shared to deceive, cause harm or achieve a broader aim.