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RRM CANADA WEEKLY TREND ANALYSIS
Report #5: Week of 16-23 September**Key Points**

- RRM Canada did not observe any clear evidence of foreign state-sponsored information manipulation in its monitoring of the broader Canadian digital information ecosystem during the period of 16-23 September. Chinese state and party media reporting on GE44 and the Conservative Party of Canada's proposed China policies tapered off leading to Election Day. Contracted partner reporting validates this point.
- Despite rising tensions in online discussions throughout most of the week, RRM Canada did not observe significant instances of malign state actors attempting to leverage these discussions to sow division and polarize Canadian society.
- Secondary sources reported on the continued evolution of Chinese efforts to influence democratic societies worldwide.
- RRM Canada analysed alternative social media platforms BitChute and Gab and identified links between Canadian and Australian ideologically motivated narratives.

Objective

This is the fifth, and final, report in a series of RRM Canada weekly reports aimed at consolidating and summarising trends and findings associated with possible foreign state-sponsored information manipulation in Canada's 44th General Election (GE44). The report is based on in-house monitoring, primary and secondary sources, and contracted partners' reporting available to RRM Canada at the time of its compilation. The report: 1) provides a summary of RRM Canada daily threat updates shared with the Security and Intelligence Threats to Election (SITE) Task Force and contracted partner reporting; 2) highlights issues related to influence campaigns by known hostile actors; and 3) provides an analysis of alternative social media channels.

1) Summary of RRM Canada Daily Threat Updates and Contracted Partner Reporting

- During the reporting period, RRM Canada did not observe any clear evidence of foreign state-sponsored information manipulation in its daily monitoring of the broader Canadian digital information ecosystem;
- The vast majority of content assessed by RRM Canada originated from recognizable Canadian news or information sites (either in English, French, Chinese, or Russian);
- Chinese state and party media reporting on GE44 and the Conservative Party of Canada's proposed China policies tapered off leading to Election Day. RRM Canada observed what may have been a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) information operation that aimed to discourage Canadians of Chinese heritage from voting for the Conservative Party of Canada between Sept 9-17. The narrative suggested a possible rupture in Canadian-Chinese relations and Chinese retribution if the Conservative Party were elected. However, on Election Day, and during the three days that preceded it, CCP media outlets did not publish any stories about GE44. Canadian WeChat accounts did not publish any editorials urging Canadians of Chinese heritage to vote for a specific candidate or party either.
- Canadian media – both major newspapers and Chinese language news – reported on the potential CCP information operation.

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- Before Election Day, CPC candidate Kenny Chiu pointed out that large volumes of false messages and personal attacks on his campaign were “beyond [his] expectation.” Following his electoral defeat, Chiu complained about the Government of Canada’s inability to address the “blind spots” in relation to Chinese interference with Canadian society.
- Chinese Communist Party media outlets did not comment on the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) minority government victory. Canadian WeChat accounts carried neutral commentary pieces on the results of GE44. However, *Buyidao*, an anonymous blog reported to be run by CCP outlet the *Global Times*, reported on the loss of Conservative Party candidates Kenny Chiu and Alice Wong in GE44. The blog author states: ethnic Chinese in Canada have “only one wish – whoever is more anti-China, they must be pulled down! If one political party is more anti-China, than oppose that party!” The article received some attention from WeChat users.
- Russian state-affiliated and mainstream media continued to cover events in Canada, including those related to GE44, but in lower volumes than before and with limited engagements.
 - In state media and affiliated ‘grey site’ coverage, most articles published were critical of LPC and PM Trudeau.

Yonder did not observe any indications of a sustained campaign targeting GE44 during the reporting period. The firm saw decreasing volumes and engagements from accounts that generally amplify Chinese and Russian state sources. In general, Yonder reports that Chinese and China state-aligned accounts continued to amplify messages by or supportive of the LPC, while Russia-friendly accounts continued to amplify Peoples Party of Canada (PPC)-related content.

The Media Ecosystem Observatory found no evidence of FI activities during this period; however, they did note increased levels of interest in GE44 which tapered off in the final week of the campaign.¹

2) Foreign State-sponsored Campaigns Against Democracies

Chinese influence operations in the world

- The Strategic Research Institute of France's Military College (IRSEM) released a comprehensive, new study on the evolution of Chinese influence operations during the last decade. It covers the overt and covert institutions, as well as actions and narratives, used by Beijing to manipulate public opinion in the West. It includes case studies, including Canada, to demonstrate how actions taken by China manipulate respective diasporas, political figures and media outlets using diplomatic, economic, educational and clandestine means.
- The report assesses that China is interested in influencing Canadian politics and public opinion due to Canada’s role in NATO and the Five Eyes and proximity to the US and Arctic. It discusses Chinese efforts targeting Chinese dissidents in Canada, Canadian politicians, media and university students, with specific attention paid to the respective roles played by WeChat and Confucius Institutes. The report asserts that China engages in these activities since “Beijing...believes it is in a position of strength” due to a significant number of Chinese-

¹ This information is based on reports submitted by independent service providers contracted to support RRM Canada’s monitoring activities during GE44. It is provided here for your information only. Yonder and Media Ecosystem Observatory views and assessments, in part or fully, are those of its respective authors and may not represent those of RRM Canada.

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Canadians, Canada's dependence on the Chinese market and the relative disparity between the countries. As a 'middle power', the risks of Canadian retaliation against China appear to be smaller.

3) Alternative Media Environments: BitChute and Gab

As part of its GE44 monitoring, RRM Canada conducted selective analysis of alternative social media channels. Videos analysed on BitChute² revealed a trend connecting Canada to Australia in relation to 'politician tyranny' and police enforcement of Covid-19 restrictions. In addition, the 'Canada News' group on Gab³ contained claims of election fraud and content personally targeting PM Trudeau in the days leading up to GE44. No FI activities were identified.

- Three videos ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) were posted and shared on BitChute negatively connecting Canadian and Australian politics in video titles and captions. For example, one video was an hour-long interview with PPC candidate David Freiheit. In the video, whose title questions "will Canada fall & become Australia", Freiheit stated that "if it's a Liberal majority... it's going to be the end of Canada as we know it... we're going to end up looking like Australia". The candidate also appeared to be falsely claiming that it is extremely difficult to cast a mail-in ballot in Canada. Several other videos on BitChute compared Canada to Australia without much context for the comparison in the videos themselves.
- On Gab, the most popular [post](#) contained a call to action to attend a "World Wide Rally for Freedom" in Ottawa on September 18, "against COVID mandates and lockdowns"; it received limited engagement. Three other posts ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) contained claims of vote fraud, stating that Elections Canada added in results data too early on election night, and that 'corrupt' Dominion Voting systems were used in GE44. Two other posts ([1](#), [2](#)) contained content personally targeting PM Trudeau.

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² BitChute has been [reported](#) to be a "hotbed of hate" by the Anti-Defamation League. This analysis of BitChute was conducted on videos that result from searching "Canada", "Canada election", or "Canada Australia" on the platforms.

³ Created in 2016, Gab has been [found](#) to be a destination for individuals who have been de-platformed by Twitter and Reddit for violating their terms of service. This analysis provides an overview on the top-engaged election-related posts on the "[Canada News](#)" Gab group between September 17-21, 2021. The group has over 39,400 members.

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