

Canadian
Security
Intelligence
Service

Service
canadien du
renseignement
de sécurité

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

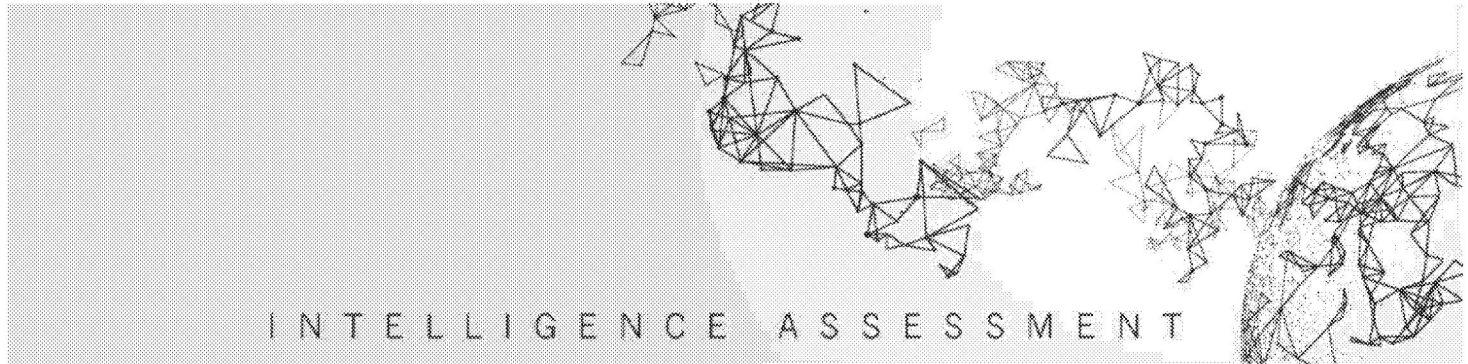
INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

PRC Foreign Interference in Canada: A Critical
National Security Threat



Intelligence Assessments Branch
Direction de l'évaluation du renseignement

Canada



2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

PRC Foreign Interference in Canada: A Critical National Security Threat

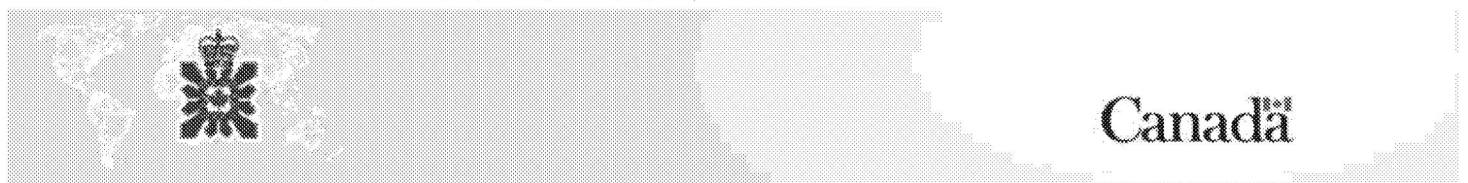
The People's Republic of China's (PRC's) foreign interference (FI) activities in Canada continue to be sophisticated, pervasive and persistent.¹ To conduct these threat activities, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leverages a range of Party (e.g. the United Front Work Department [UFWD]), government (e.g. the diplomatic corps) and non-government assets (e.g. community groups and trusted contacts). The PRC is [redacted] using a complex array of both overt and covert mechanisms (e.g. open media, clandestine influence through third parties, [redacted]) that are enabled by a vast range of resources to achieve its goals. (TS//CEO)

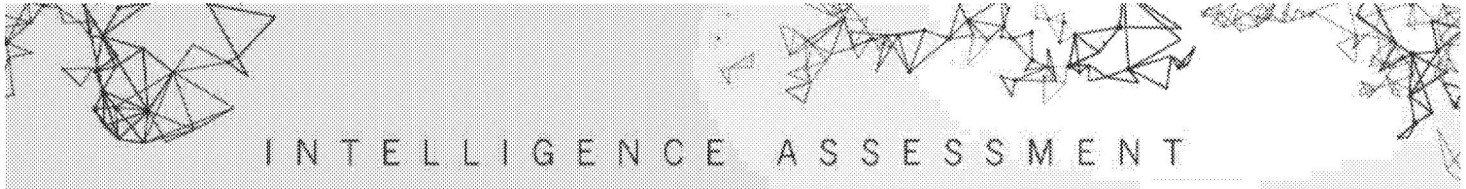
This document serves as a baseline for understanding the intent, motives, and scope of PRC FI in Canada. It covers why the PRC's approach to influence is different than ours, the nature of the UFWD as well as united front work, why the PRC is interested in Canada, and the focus and impact on PRC FI on Canada. (TS//CEO)

Key Assessments

- The PRC is the foremost perpetrator of FI activity in Canada and pragmatically targets all levels of government (including provincial and municipal levels), in addition to various facets of Canadian society, including vulnerable diaspora groups, media entities, dissidents, activists, elites, elected officials and academics. (TS//CEO)
- Canada is a high-priority PRC FI target, and the Party intends to use Canada and Canadians to proactively support PRC interests. [redacted]
[redacted] PRC FI targeting Canada is expected to continue and increase over time. (TS//CEO)
- United front work includes a spectrum of overt as well as clandestine and deceptive approaches used by PRC officials and diplomats. This work, which is guided by the UFWD, often takes place in a legal and normative 'grey zone', is antithetical to liberal-democratic governance and the rule of law. (TS//CEO)

¹ "Foreign Interference" in this context refers to activities covered by Section 2(b) of the CSIS Act, i.e., "foreign influenced activities within or relating to Canada that are detrimental to the interests of Canada and are clandestine or deceptive or involve a threat to any person". For additional information, see CSIS IA 2017-18/10, "Chinese Foreign Influenced Activities in Canada: Sophisticated, Pervasive and Persistent". (TS//CEO)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

Why PRC influence efforts are different

1. The PRC's approach to diplomatic influence is fundamentally different than that of Canada's. [redacted]
 [redacted] the CCP seeks to exercise long-term and full-scale influence on issues that are relevant to its strategic objectives. To do so, the Party often leverages non-transparent methods, at times using clandestine, deceptive and threatening tools and methodologies to interfere in areas of interest. These influence and interference efforts are supported by an opaque and large bureaucracy comprised of overlapping state and Party organizations that are specifically designed to conduct FI activities. One such entity, the United Front Work Department (UFWD), is critical to these efforts, and actively seeks to conduct and support FI activities to further PRC interests, including co-opting foreign entities (especially elites) through the promulgation of united front work. (TS//CEO)

2. [redacted]
 [redacted] Accordingly, it is willing to use a variety of coercive and deceptive practices as part of its 'normal' diplomatic activities to achieve long-term strategic goals. [redacted]
 [redacted] (S//CEO)

What is the United Front Work Department and United Front Work?

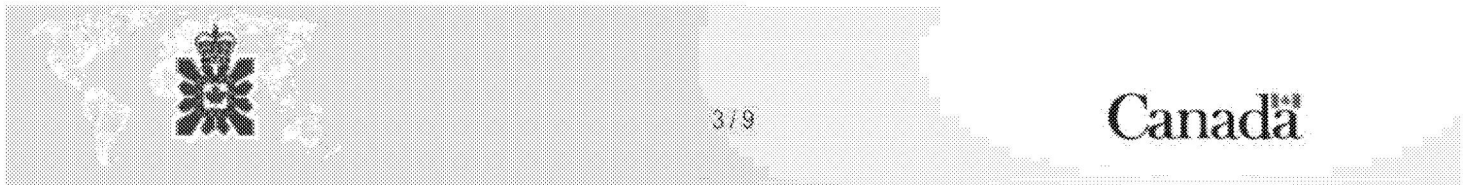
3. The UFWD reports directly to the Central Committee of the CCP, and is a Party entity, not a government entity. The UFWD's primary role is to ensure, via its vast network, that united front work (i.e. work to strengthen a united front coalition that furthers the influence and interests of the CCP) is carried out effectively both inside and outside the PRC. The UFWD takes a leading role in carrying out FI work abroad as one of Xi Jinping's 'magic weapons' to further CCP priorities. (S//CEO)

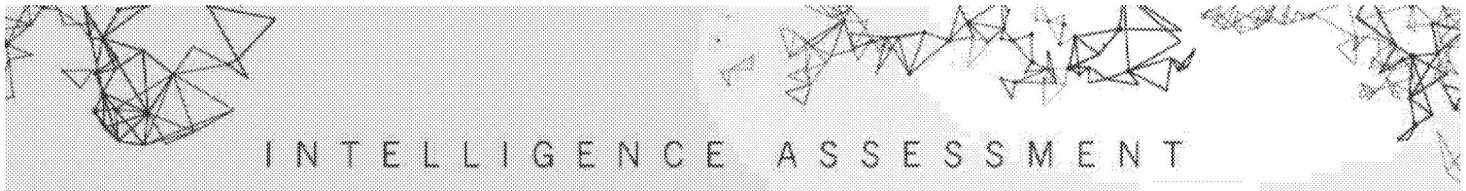
4. [redacted]
 [redacted] (S//CEO)

5. [redacted]
 [redacted] (S//CEO)

6. [redacted]

The targets of united front work include diaspora communities, businesspeople, academics, politicians and political staffers, media, and religious communities. (S//CEO)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

Why is the PRC interested in Canada?

7. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

[Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

8. The primary goal of PRC FI activities in Canada is to further Party-state interests in a manner that protects and enhances the legitimacy and stability of the CCP domestically and abroad. To achieve these goals, PRC FI actors seek to target and leverage Canadian entities that are perceived to impact important CCP interests. While members of the broader Chinese diaspora tend to be the focus of PRC FI activities, the PRC is pragmatic and seeks to target and use any individual of potential value through either inducements or coercive means. (TS//CEO)

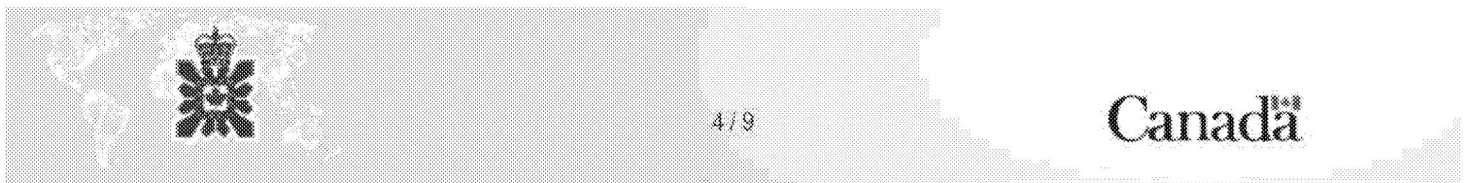
What is the Focus and Impact of PRC FI in Canada?

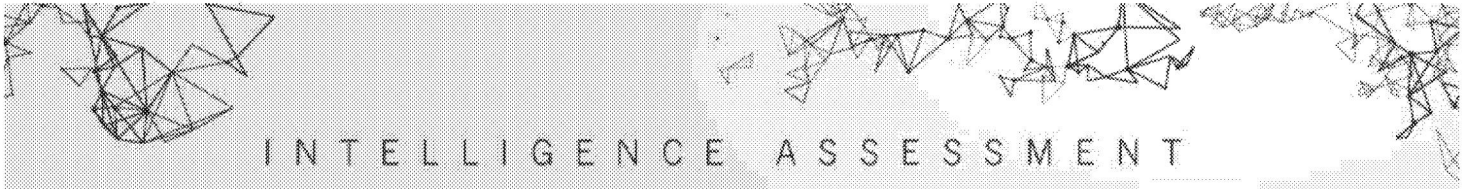
9. CSIS assesses that the PRC is the foremost perpetrator of FI activity targeting Canada. (S//CEO)

- The PRC targets all levels of government (including the provincial and municipal levels), and various facets of Canadian society (e.g. diaspora groups, the general public, media entities). FI activities often transcend party lines, ideologies and ethnic backgrounds, and often take place over a period of several years. It is also important to note that PRC FI threat actors are largely pragmatic and tend to pursue paths of least resistance. (S//CEO)
- PRC-linked threat actors (to include third parties such as friendly community groups and trusted contacts/interlocutors acting on the behalf of the PRC state) regularly target non-federal stakeholders (e.g. municipalities and provinces).

[Redacted]

The PRC targets municipal-level actors in particular as a means of generating 'bottom-up' pressure on higher levels of government (e.g. provincial, federal) to influence policies to the benefit of the PRC. In some cases, the PRC seeks to target First Nations and indigenous communities to achieve similar goals. (S//CEO)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

Targeting of Democratic and Electoral Institutions and Processes

10. [Redacted]

PRC FI activity targeting Canada's democratic institutions is primarily motivated by a desire to cultivate relationships, or support political candidates and incumbents, who seem receptive or actively promote PRC viewpoints.

[Redacted] (TS//CEO)

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] (S//CEO)

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] (TS//CEO)

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] (S//CEO)

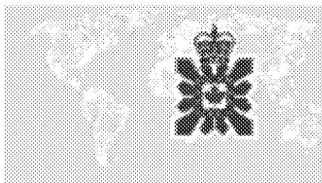
11. [Redacted]

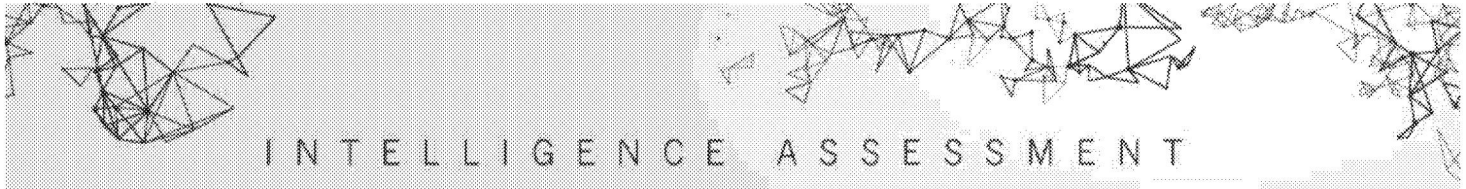
[Redacted]

[Redacted] (S//CEO)

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] (S//CEO)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

Media Interference, [redacted]

12. [redacted]

[redacted] (TS//CEO)

- [redacted] the former editor for Sing Tao, a popular Chinese-language publication in Canada, risked the ire of Beijing by publicly noting that "Beijing has become the mainstream now in Chinese newspapers or magazine[s]" in Canada. The former editor noted that Canada is now devoid of any "independent and non-partisan" media outlet dealing with "Chinese affairs". (S//CEO)
- PRC FI actors have sought to use Canada-based media outlets to shape Canadian opinions [redacted]
[redacted] (TS//CEO)

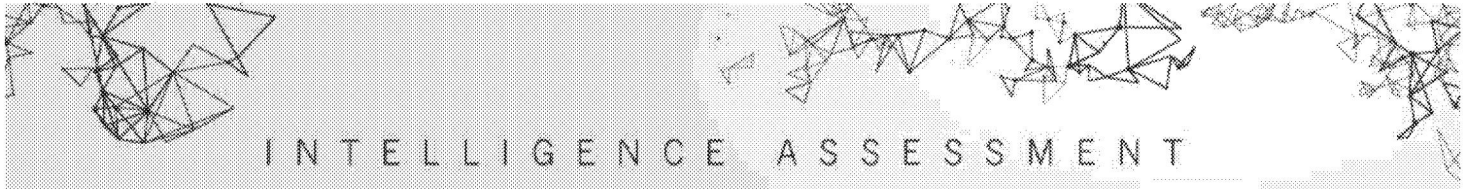
Harassment, intimidation, and coercion of entities in Canada by the PRC

13. The CCP regularly targets members and groups from what it refers to as the 'Five Poisons': entities associated with the Falun Gong, Taiwan/Taiwanese independence, Tibet/Tibetan independence, Xinjiang separatism/Uyghur minorities, and pro-democracy movements (especially in relation to Hong Kong). The CCP perceives these groups as critical threats to the Party's stability and legitimacy. The PRC attempts to intimidate and silence members of these communities through a variety of coercive means, to include threatening family members residing in the PRC or denying visas to those wishing to travel back to visit. (S//CEO)

- [redacted]
[redacted] (S//CEO)

- [redacted]
(S)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

Anti-Corruption Campaigns, FOXHUNT/SKYNET

14. The CCP's politically driven anti-corruption campaigns play an important role in Party efforts to maintain regime stability and legitimacy. Certain victims of anti-corruption campaigns are almost certainly targets of political convenience. In Canada, these campaigns have manifested themselves via the PRC government "FOXHUNT/SKYNET" campaign. The campaign likely continues to be an issue of high interest to the PRC government and a key part of the CCP's so-called anti-corruption strategy, which is publicly referenced as having the dual purpose of targeting Xi's political opponents. (S//CEO)

- [Redacted]

(S//CEO)

- [Redacted]

(S//CEO)

Online Targeting and Social Media Manipulation

15. [Redacted]

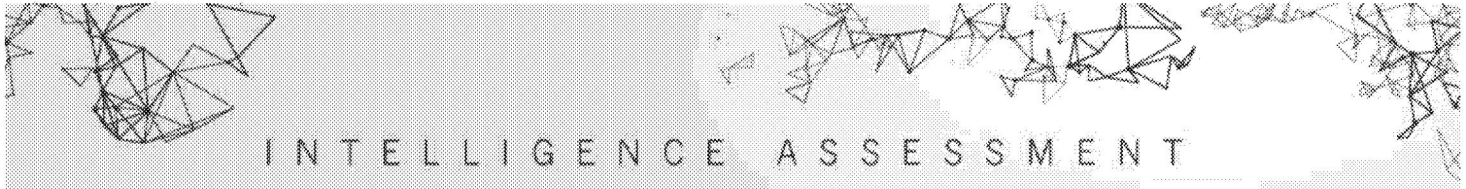
[Redacted] Certain social media platforms, notably Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, have already taken action to address PRC online interference efforts, for example by closing accounts linked to suspected PRC-linked inauthentic activity (e.g. use of bots). (S//CEO)

- [Redacted]

(S//CEO)

- In March 2021, Facebook's threat intelligence team released a report about a group of PRC-based hackers known in the security industry as "Earth Empusa" or "Evil Eye". This group, which used various tactics such as fake accounts on Facebook to create fictitious personas, reportedly targeted "activists, journalists and dissidents predominantly among Uyghurs from Xinjiang" who were living outside the PRC, including in Canada. According to Facebook, this group used "various cyber espionage tactics" to identify targets and





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

infect their devices with malware to "enable surveillance". Facebook concluded that this activity "had the hallmarks of a well-resourced and persistent operation". While Facebook itself did not specifically accuse the PRC government of engaging in or sponsoring these activities, FireEye Mandiant Threat Intelligence analysis director Ben Read noted that he believed "this operation was conducted in support of the [Chinese] government, which frequently targets the Uyghur minority through cyber espionage activity".² Open sources also indicate that FireEye research assisted Facebook in its efforts. (C)

Outlook

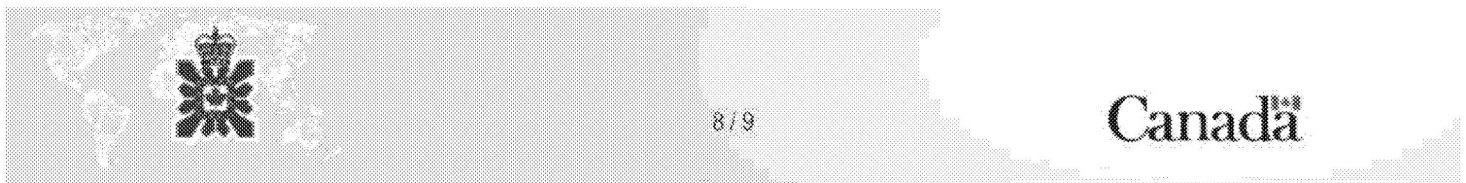
16. CSIS has investigated PRC threat-related activities in Canada for over three decades. While the PRC has become arguably more aggressive in asserting its national interests under President Xi Jinping, the Party-state has repeatedly demonstrated over the span of several decades that it is extremely willing to engage in clandestine, deceptive and threatening interference activities in Canada whenever necessary.

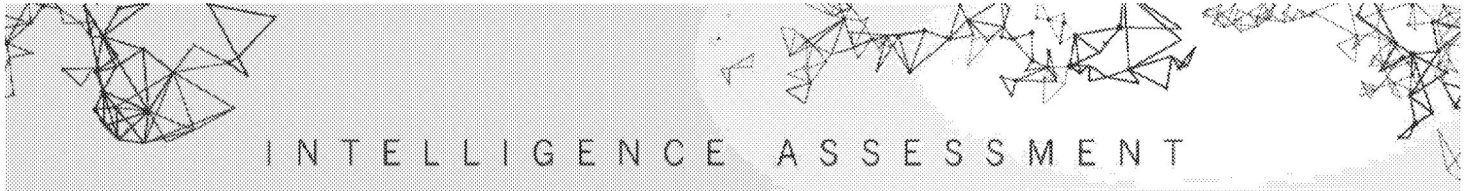
[Redacted]

Threat actors specifically seek to manipulate, misuse and co-opt Canadian institutions to further the interests of the CCP, using a system of reward and punishment to use Canadian voices to further united front work and Party interests. CSIS assesses that these PRC FI activities targeting Canada will continue – if not intensify – in the near future.

(TS//CEO)

² FireEye is a California-based cybersecurity company specializing in the detection and prevention of cyber attacks. In 2013, FireEye acquired Mandiant, a private company known for investigating high-profile hacking groups. FireEye Mandiant is considered to be an authority on cybersecurity, and has been involved in providing advice to a range of government departments, including the United States' National Security Agency. (C)





2021 07 20

TOP SECRET//CANADIAN EYES ONLY

CSIS IA 2021-22/31

[Redacted]

CSIS_PUBLICATIONS / SCRS_PUBLICATIONS

THIS INFORMATION IS SHARED WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES ONLY AND MAY NOT BE USED IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS. THIS DOCUMENT MAY NOT BE RECLASSIFIED, DISSEMINATED OR DISCLOSED IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF CSIS. THIS DOCUMENT CONSTITUTES A RECORD WHICH MAY BE SUBJECT TO EXEMPTIONS UNDER THE *FEDERAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT* OR *PRIVACY ACT* OR UNDER APPLICABLE PROVINCIAL OR TERRITORIAL LEGISLATION. IF A REQUEST FOR ACCESS UNDER THESE ACTS IS MADE, THE RECEIVING AGENCY MUST CONSULT CSIS IN RELATION TO APPLYING THE AVAILABLE EXEMPTIONS. FURTHER, CSIS MAY TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS UNDER SECTION 38 OF THE *CANADA EVIDENCE ACT* OR OTHER LEGISLATION TO PROTECT THIS INFORMATION. IF YOU LEARN THAT THIS INFORMATION HAS OR MAY BE DISCLOSED, THAT THESE CAVEATS HAVE NOT BEEN RESPECTED OR IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ABIDE BY THESE CAVEATS, INFORM CSIS IMMEDIATELY.

