



# In Plain Sight

Beijing's unrestricted network of foreign influence in Canada

May 2021



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# Introduction

It has long been the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) ambition to create a new international order by "uniting friends and isolating enemies."<sup>1</sup> This ideological struggle has been brewing for decades as China increases its capabilities to combat what it views as unchallenged western imperialism after China's "century of humiliation." Through globalization's economic, technological, social, and political interconnectedness, the CCP has extended its reach beyond the physical borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The CCP's obsession to preserve its power further drives China's desire to obtain global totalitarian control.<sup>2</sup> Beijing's understanding of national security sees economics, culture, technology, governance, and other facets of societal stability as critical components to regime security. In order to achieve Beijing's objectives, the party-state apparatus utilized globalization as a path to power. To preserve its ideological, economic, and party interests, the Chinese authorities actively interfere in the political systems of liberal-democratic countries to shift political environments towards China-friendly politicians and policies.

Beijing's strategy has included targeting of global networks, international norms, and multilateral platforms. Weaponizing integration, the CCP carves its place in the international sphere, joining established global institutions to ultimately undermine and reshape them — United Nations, Wall Street, Hollywood, international ports and infrastructures, World Health Organization to name a few. While there have been Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) briefings, media reports, and repeated warnings of widespread Chinese foreign interference operations in Canada, there still is a persistent lack of knowledge and understanding of these networks of influence within Canadian institutions, politics, and society.

The tactics deployed by the CCP and its affiliates fall under seven broad categories covered in this report: (1) political influence, (2) elite capture, (3) surveillance and intimidation, (4) information and narrative discursion, (5) academic influence and intellectual property vulnerabilities, (6) national security, and (7) the United Front Work Department (UFWD).

The report is an overview and provides some insights into the CCP's influence operations in Canada. The activities carried out by the Chinese party-state and its affiliates often blurs the line between foreign influence and foreign interference operations. To differentiate between influence and interference, it is imperative to consider these activities under three categories: covert, coercion, and corruption.

Canada lacks a comprehensive foreign interference framework to address these issues. As we enter into a new geopolitical era, a foreign interference framework must be a priority for all levels of governments in Canada. The end of this brief provides recommendations for how Canada may combat foreign interference and mitigate foreign influence.

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<sup>1</sup> [Record of Deng Xiaoping's Speech: Conference Paper](#) (1 June, 2018). Red Flag Publishing Company.

<sup>2</sup> [Annual Report 2020](#) (18 December, 2020). National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

## Factors for Consideration

The following factors for consideration are not widely discussed within research or media, but it is vital that they are taken into context when discussing the Chinese party-state and their operations.

First, the diaspora community is not a monolith and should not be treated as such. A new era of geopolitical relations with the PRC has come with increasing racial tensions. Not every individual who identifies as ethnic-Chinese supports the CCP regime; such a claim is reductive and harmful. These misconceptions pose a real threat to public safety, as xenophobia and anti-Asian sentiments rise across Canada.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the Chinese party-state apparatus has established a global system of control, surveillance, and influence over the diaspora, including Chinese citizens. This has created a climate of fear and silence. Many are fearful of criticizing the Chinese government as it could cost them career opportunities, business prospects, bar them from returning to PRC-controlled territories, and even jeopardize their personal safety and their extended family members.<sup>4</sup> In addition to self-censorship, Chinese and diaspora communities often engage in lateral policing and surveillance. Those who are vocal against the CCP often pay steep personal costs such as self-exile or harassment.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, private companies in China should not be assumed to operate independently from the party-state apparatus.<sup>6</sup> Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese private companies are tightly regulated to serve as part of the party-state apparatus.<sup>7</sup> The murky boundaries between the Chinese private sector and the Chinese authorities is poorly understood within Canadian political and civil society. Collaboration with the Chinese private sector potentially subjects Canadian entities to Beijing's dispositions.

## Political Influence

There have been notable incidents of China's inappropriate and overreaching political influence documented in Canada and among allied countries. But the CCP's influence operations have largely gone unnoticed, if not ignored, by politicians, oversight bodies, the media, and the public. Due to the seemingly-benign nature of tactics employed by the foreign state actors, it is difficult

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<sup>3</sup> [Reports of Anti-Asian hate crimes are surging in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (17 March, 2021). *CTV News*.

<sup>4</sup> [Why some Chinese immigrants living in Canada live in silent fear](#) (25 February, 2019). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>5</sup> [Harassment & Intimidation of individuals in Canada working on China-related human rights concerns](#) (March 2020). *Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China & Amnesty International Canada*.

<sup>6</sup> [How the state runs business in China](#) (25 July, 2019). *The Guardian*.

<sup>7</sup> [China's Xi Ramps Up Control of Private Sector](#) (10 December, 2020). *The Wall Street Journal*.

to map out the delicately intertwined systems of influence.<sup>8</sup> The CCP's political influence strategy broadly relies on economic incentives and electoral interference. Additionally, elite capture<sup>9</sup> — which will be covered in the following section — is a favoured tactic of the Chinese party-state.

## Methods

Political influence in Canada is exerted during election campaigns and also extends to politicians, public servants, political actors, former parliamentarians, and diplomats.

While influence operations happen federally, the political influence strategy is more frequently aimed at politicians at the provincial and municipal levels.<sup>10 11</sup> Local politicians are less likely to be concerned with foreign affairs matters (see Appendix B - Interview #2), which is seen as a primarily federal issue.<sup>12</sup> Beijing capitalizes on this lack of awareness of foreign influence operations.<sup>13</sup> Decision makers are typically incentivized through offers of lucrative investment projects<sup>14</sup> and business deals<sup>15</sup> that would greatly benefit local communities. Political actors in the provincial, territorial, and municipal are especially vulnerable to attractive and inflated financial deals, as communities they serve can become reliant on these funding opportunities.

Political influence is observed across every region and level of governance in Canada. Especially notable cases are: the Belt and Road Initiative of British Columbia,<sup>16</sup> Dondu International's investments in Nova Scotia,<sup>17</sup> resource extraction projects in Newfoundland and Labrador,<sup>18 19</sup> and Ontario's past Minister Michael Chan, whom CSIS alleges to have ties with the Chinese consulate and to be under the influence of the Chinese government.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This report investigates and outlines the United Front network of official agencies that reaches outside of the PRC to carry out influence and interference operations on behalf of the party-state: [The Party Speaks for You](#) (9 June, 2020). *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*.

<sup>9</sup> [Why CSIS believes Canada is a 'permissive target' for China's interference](#) (24 June, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>10</sup> [Running for municipal office, I was targeted by China](#) (24 August, 2020). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>11</sup> ['Prime targets': Are Canada's local politicians in the sights of Beijing's global PR machine?](#) (14 August, 2020). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>12</sup> [China's playbook for hooking local governments](#). (12 February, 2020). *Axios*.

<sup>13</sup> BC NDP said that "foreign policy relations are the responsibility of the federal government, not the provincial government: [BC NDP silent on China's human rights; ambiguous on Belt and Road Initiative](#) (20 October, 2020). *Business Intelligence for BC*.

<sup>14</sup> [DongDu International's Nova Scotia developments slow to take](#) (19 April, 2016). *CBC*.

<sup>15</sup> BC Liberal Party initiated several trade missions to China between 2013 and 2017 and signed an MOU on that country's "One Belt One Road" global trade initiative: [Chinese Communist Party agreement with B.C. needs federal 'cues': Wilkinson](#), (16 October, 2020). *Business Intelligence for BC*.

<sup>16</sup> [China is paving its 'belt and road' to British Columbia](#) (17 August, 2020). *Business Intelligence for BC*.

<sup>17</sup> [Why a Chinese real estate firm is planning to pump \\$3-billion into tourism in Nova Scotia](#) (27 May, 2014). *Financial Post*.

<sup>18</sup> [Iron ore 'one of the highlights' of N.L. economy amid catastrophic pandemic](#) (21 May, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>19</sup> [Chinese company gets green light to explore offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador](#) (28 December, 2019). *The Saltwire*.

<sup>20</sup> [Kathleen Wynne defends cabinet minister CSIS alleges is under influence of Chinese government](#) (17 June, 2015). *National Post*.

The CCP's tactics to influence elections<sup>21</sup> have included providing incentives to Chinese and diasporic communities to elect politicians who favour engagement with China.<sup>22</sup> Often unbeknownst to political candidates, their WeChat campaign groups are quickly taken over by individuals and groups who have vested interests and/or close ties to actors of the UFWD (the UFWD will be covered in-depth in a later section).<sup>23</sup> These WeChat groups are a beneficial resource for political actors, in mobilizing donors and volunteers. It is also important to note that these particular groups form a small minority and do not broadly represent the Chinese-Canadian diaspora. Some Chinese-Canadians have taken to online forums<sup>24</sup> to lament how UFWD-tied groups falsely represent the community (see Appendix A). Many Canadian political actors genuinely believe that they are interacting with community organizers and grassroots organizations, when in fact they are interacting with actors that have close connections with the Chinese Consulates or the Embassy.<sup>25</sup>

## Important Areas of Concern

While political donations are regulated by democratic institutions, such as Elections Canada and the Ethics Commission, political influence operations are not limited to electoral cycles and civic engagement. Other forms of contribution, such as mobilizing volunteers, in-kind donations, community outreach, are activities that cannot be regulated. Without adequate frameworks and education for political candidates on all levels, candidates and campaigns are vulnerable to political influence from foreign actors. Certain regions in Canada are more vulnerable to active political interference by the CCP. For many provinces and territories, Chinese party-state affiliated actors' investments into the region have resulted in reliance, which enables state actors to sway political actors into compliance in exchange for continued investments and funding. Opportunities that can match the funding of the CCP and its affiliates are rarely seen in Canada.

Political influence operations continue to persist in spite of presented evidence, and many Canadian politicians are wading into situations that leave them vulnerable.<sup>26</sup> Without clear national regulatory frameworks, education, and guidelines, political actors are vulnerable to ludicrous foreign investments and collaborations with malicious state actors. It is incredibly risky for politicians and public servants to be unaware of clandestine foreign influence and espionage

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<sup>21</sup> China, India trying to promote sympathetic candidates, say government and intelligence sources. [Federal parties being warned of efforts by 6 foreign countries to influence election: sources](#) (16 September, 2019), CBC.

<sup>22</sup> Canada Wenzhou Friendship Society WeChat group offered a \$20 "transportation subsidy" incentive for Chinese-Canadians to vote for Wai Young: [Update: Vancouver city hall refers WeChat vote-buying scheme to police](#) (12 October, 2018). *The Breaker*.

<sup>23</sup> [Trudeau says using minister's WeChat group to fund lawsuit against journalist was 'unacceptable'](#) (26 May, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>24</sup> Translated text available in Appendix A: [原创：祖国饶了我们吧！我们华人只想安静地在加拿大生活](#) [Translated: Original Post: China give us a break. We, the Chinese people, only want to live in Canada quietly.] (30 May, 2020). *Chinese Chat Forum*.

<sup>25</sup> [Did Canadian politicians know the victims of a targeted shooting at a trendy Richmond restaurant?](#) (5 October, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>26</sup> Tong Xiaoling, the Chinese consul-general in Vancouver rubs shoulders with many politicians in CBA reception: [Defence minister ripped for attending gala honouring Chinese Communist Party anniversary](#) (1 October, 2019). *National Post*.



activities when major actors are trying to influence decisions<sup>27</sup> and sway public opinion<sup>28</sup> in Canada. Under the current landscape, it is difficult to differentiate whether Canadian decision makers have informed consent or are unwittingly entering into coercive agreements.

## Elite Capture

Beijing also engages in elite capture from the public service, academia,<sup>29</sup> the private sector,<sup>30</sup> and non-profit organizations.<sup>31 32 33</sup> While the PRC is not the only nation to engage in elite capture, it has been one of the more successful countries to have done so. It should be made clear that the CCP does not seek to talent drain or corrupt Canadian elites, but to create engagement, influence policy decisions, and form mainstream discussions<sup>34</sup> that are more favourable to Chinese party-state interests.<sup>35</sup>

## Methods

Elite capture is not only initiated by Chinese party-state actors, but also through individuals, businesses and organizations that have affiliations with the CCP and the Chinese authorities. Beijing has utilized diverse strategies and tactics to target Canadian influential figures and decision makers, often appealing to their personal, social, political, and professional interests.

The formula of elite capture operations by the CCP and its affiliates can be distilled into a simple process. First, a lucrative opportunity is offered to an individual. Later, this can be used against an individual as a bargaining chip to force individuals into compliance with the regime's request. (Appendix B - see Interview #1)

Well known assertive, overt tactics include offering carefully choreographed all-expense-paid trips to China<sup>36 37</sup> to sway perceptions and cultivate vocal supporters, invitations to events with

<sup>27</sup> E-Petition 2857 to Free Meng: [e-2857 \(Foreign affairs\)](#) (29 September, 2019). *House of Commons*.

<sup>28</sup> [Former parliamentarians, diplomats pen letter calling on Canada to release Meng](#) (24 June, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>29</sup> [Gorden Houlden, President of China College, University of Alberta, Canada, Gives a Lecture to English Course](#) (5 November, 2014). *International College of Defence Studies, People's Liberation Army*.

<sup>30</sup> [China is paving its 'belt and road' to British Columbia](#) (17 August, 2020). *Business Intelligence for BC*.

<sup>31</sup> [CSIS Public Report 2020](#) (April 2021). *Canadian Security Intelligence Service*.

<sup>32</sup> [Former parliamentarians, diplomats pen letter calling on Canada to release Meng](#) (24 June, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>33</sup> [Morning Update: CSIS warns about Beijing's efforts to recruit Canadian scientists](#) (6 August, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>34</sup> [Richmondite hopes UBC business forum can bridge Canada-China divide](#) (9 March, 2021). *Richmond News*.

<sup>35</sup> [Interview: Author Joanna Chiu on how the West tried to curry favour with an expansionist China](#) (22 May, 2021). *Hong Kong Free Press*.

<sup>36</sup> [Coquitlam school trustees' free trips to China raise ethical concerns](#) (9 December, 2017). *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>37</sup> [Port Coquitlam mayor 'appalled' elected school board trustees are considering trip paid for by China](#) (16 January, 2019). *Global News*.

ties to the UFWD<sup>38</sup>, exerting influence through business and economic incentives that will benefit their region, sponsoring cultural events<sup>39 40 41</sup> and social conferences,<sup>42</sup> organizing cash for access events,<sup>43</sup> placing volunteers and staff near decision makers,<sup>44</sup> and creating parasitic relationships through donations and social capital.<sup>45</sup>

## Important Areas of Concern

Elite capture operations are a tool of foreign influence seeping into the network of decision makers, leaders, and elites of every sector is an effective way to sway the Canadian discourse about China favourably.<sup>46</sup> These tactics have gone unchallenged and normalized as part of “engagement” and networking between Canada and PRC. Most Canadians have difficulties identifying these efforts of elite capture as foreign influence and understanding the national security risks. Many Canadians believe that these efforts of outreach to Canadian leaders as merely harmless collaboration, but in fact these activities often fall into grey areas and often lead to influence and interference operations as decision makers try to “appease” their Chinese “friends”.<sup>47</sup>

Though the majority of these operations are not considered as criminal or direct threats to Canadian national security, these patterns of behaviour are inappropriate and should be disclosed to the Canadian public. There are no transparency mechanisms or regulatory standards of foreign actors in Canada, making it extremely difficult for Canadians to identify foreign state-affiliated actors. As most of these influence activities are hidden from the public’s view, the CCP and other foreign hostile actors are further emboldened to continue its elite capture operations within Canadian society.

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<sup>38</sup> After being elected the first mainland Chinese PC MPP in Ontario in 2018, Ke became the only MPP to attend the launch of a pro-China Tibet group, itself sporting close ties to the Chinese consulate and its network of pro-Beijing groups - the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations: [Is China interfering in Canada's election?](#) (1 October, 2020). *True North, Far East*.

<sup>39</sup> [Annual — and potentially final — Chinese reception at UBCM convention taking place tonight](#) (25 September, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>40</sup> [Chinese consulate goes ahead with reception for B.C. municipal leaders, despite concerns of foreign relations](#) (26 September, 2019). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>41</sup> [Canadian mayors may have unwittingly been targets of Chinese influence campaign](#) (12 March, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>42</sup> [Consul General Wang Jinping held a welcome reception for the delegation of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs](#) [translated] (29 July, 2014). *Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Calgary*.

<sup>43</sup> Zhang Bin is a political advisor to the Chinese government, and after attending the event, he and his partner ... donated \$1 million ... including \$50,000 to build a statue of the former prime minister: [Trudeau defends fundraiser with Chinese businessman who later donated \\$200,000 to father's foundation](#) (25 November, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>44</sup> [A video links Richmond MP's campaign to pro-China rally](#) (4 October, 2019). *Richmond News*.

<sup>45</sup> In the 1990s, United Front networks just made passive political donations to all Canadian political parties, Fung said. Now they are aggressively lobbying for Beijing’s policies, covertly offering political funding from Beijing and attempting to promote covert CCP party members for election: [Why CSIS believes Canada is a 'permissive target' for China's interference](#) (24 June, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>46</sup> [Claims of Uyghur genocide in China are 'lies,' adviser to B.C. premier says](#) (6 April, 2021). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>47</sup> [Interview: Author Joanna Chiu on how the West tried to curry favour with an expansionist China](#) (22 May, 2021). Hong Kong Free Press.

# Surveillance & Intimidation of the Diaspora & Dissident Communities

Beijing is employing increasingly assertive strategies and even applying extraterritorial laws<sup>48</sup> to silence overseas scrutiny of CCP rule. The regime relies on nationalistic sentiments of ethnic-Chinese communities overseas, often encouraged and fueled by state-affiliated actors and/or organizations, to mobilize against Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hong Kongers, Taiwanese, Chinese, and others (including Canadians) who work or speak on China-related human rights concerns.<sup>49</sup>

## Methods

In Canada, individuals and groups are targeted by China party-state actors and Chinese nationalists, both directly<sup>50</sup> and indirectly. Intimidation abroad works in tandem with threats against family members of those who dare to speak out. Chinese authorities coordinate intimidation operations and use families who are in PRC-controlled regions as bargaining chips. Threats and harassment are sometimes paired with Chinese and foreign media campaigns to smear activists and researchers, indicating a high-level coordination.

Chinese authorities had silenced a Canadian dissident with an explicit message: “Stop condemning the Chinese government to Canadian media, or the family he had come to visit [home] would face the consequences.”<sup>51</sup> Many Canadian dissidents from Tibetan and Uyghur communities also faced similar targeted harassment and online attacks.<sup>52</sup> They reported receiving phone and video calls - often via WeChat - from the police, or from relatives at local Chinese police stations. Another common tactic of harassment is the “pressure to spy on fellow Uyghurs and organizations that scrutinise the Chinese authorities, often in return for contact with family, guarantees of relatives’ safety, or access to visas or passports.”<sup>53</sup> Recently, activists in Vancouver had received death threats for condemning a provincial advisory council chairperson who was gaslighting Uyghurs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> [If you’re reading this, Beijing says its new Hong Kong security law applies to you](#) (7 July, 2020), Fortune.

<sup>49</sup> [Harassment & Intimidation of individuals in Canada working on China-related human rights concerns](#) (March 2020). *Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China & Amnesty International Canada*.

<sup>50</sup> [China ambassador makes veiled threat to Hong Kong-based Canadians](#) (16 October, 2020). *The Guardian*.

<sup>51</sup> [‘Don’t step out of line’: Confidential report reveals how Chinese officials harass activists in Canada](#) (5 January, 2018). *National Post*.

<sup>52</sup> [Tibetan-Canadian student politician, Uyghur rights activists come under attack by Chinese students in Canada](#) (15 February, 2019). *National Post*.

<sup>53</sup> [The cost of speaking up against China](#) (31 March, 2021). *BBC*.

<sup>54</sup> [Death threats against Chinese Canadian who spoke out on Uyghur genocide claims must be investigated, say B.C. community leaders](#) (14 April, 2021). *Toronto Star*.

Social media has been a particularly useful tool for surveillance as it broadens the reach of the PRC authorities beyond its physical borders. In 2021, Facebook identified a Chinese hacking operation that targeted Uyghurs in Canada amongst other countries. The malware infecting devices was developed by Chinese private companies to enable surveillance.<sup>55</sup>

Surveillance and harassment also occur through Chinese party-state controlled cyberspaces, with Zoom<sup>56</sup> and WeChat being some of the most notable examples.<sup>57</sup> WeChat has become a global conduit of Chinese state propaganda, surveillance and intimidation. The mobilization of overseas nationalists, threats against exiled Uyghurs, and smear campaigns are often carried out through the Chinese social media behemoth.<sup>58</sup>

Surveillance and intimidation are mobilized against organizers and protests against the CCP. Pro-Beijing social media activities often intensifies in response and in the lead up to counter protests against dissidents. Pro-Beijing supporters are always equipped with signs, slogans, and tactics that are deemed “too similar to be coincidental.”<sup>59</sup> At the height of the Hong Kong unrest in 2019, it is suspected that the CCP coordinated counter protests in seven Canadian cities and in over 18 cities across the world.<sup>60</sup> Internet users on WeChat even called on the community to sabotage pro-democracy events.<sup>61</sup> Planned solidarity events were cancelled in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal due to threats and based on local police advice. Information and candid photos of pro-democracy organizers and participants were posted online and doxed after these incidents.<sup>62</sup>

Since 2019, pro-Beijing supporters have been recorded for verbally and physically abusing dissidents, activists and their supporters.<sup>63</sup> Other incidents related to the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement in Canadian high schools have resulted in physical assaults and safety concerns.<sup>64</sup> <sup>65</sup> <sup>66</sup> Pro-Beijing demonstrators verbally abused fellow students who were sticking post-it notes in support of Hong Kong, which were ripped down by the demonstrators.<sup>67</sup> <sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> [Chinese cyber espionage operation targeted Canadian Uyghurs, says Facebook](#) (24 March, 2021). *CBC*.

<sup>56</sup> [Federal prosecutors accuse Zoom executive of working with Chinese government to surveil users and suppress video calls](#) (18 December, 2020). *The Washington Post*.

<sup>57</sup> [China Intercepts WeChat Texts From U.S. And Abroad, Researchers Say](#) (29 August, 2019). *NPR*.

<sup>58</sup> [Forget TikTok. China's Powerhouse App Is WeChat, and Its Power Is Sweeping](#) (4 September, 2020). *The New York Times*.

<sup>59</sup> [Report: National Security and Chinese State Influence](#) (17 August, 2020). *Alliance Canada Hong Kong*.

<sup>60</sup> [Counter-protests against pro-Hong Kong demonstrators may reflect Chinese state influence](#) (23 August, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>61</sup> Ottawa Stand with Hong Kong received messages from pro-Beijing nationalists threatening to sabotage their October 1st protest: [Pro-Beijing Nationalists Alert](#) (30 September, 2019). *Ottawan Stand with Hong Kong Facebook*.

<sup>62</sup> ['We know where your parents live': Hong Kong activists say Canadian police helpless against online threats](#) (10 September, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>63</sup> Ottawa Stand with Hong Kong released a statement after being physically and verbally assaulted during the October 1st protest: [Canadians & Canadian-Hong Kongers rising above Chinese nationalists intimidation & attacks](#) (1 October, 2019). *Ottawan Stand with Hong Kong Facebook*.

<sup>64</sup> [Hong Kong-China tensions spill over at Burnaby high school](#) (4 October, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>65</sup> [Anonymous pro-China letter and a fight at Richmond high school prompt district-wide meetings](#) (4 December 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>66</sup> [Update: China-Hong Kong tensions spill into Richmond high school](#) (2 December, 2019). *Richmond News*.

<sup>67</sup> [Pro-China folks clash with Hong Kong supporters in Richmond](#) (2 October, 2019). *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>68</sup> [Hong Kong Lennon Wall installation at Nest vandalized, removed by 'unauthorized individual'](#) (31 January, 2020). *The Ubysey*.

<sup>69</sup> [New 'Lennon Wall' goes up at SFU as tensions run high over Hong Kong protests](#) (2 August, 2019) *CBC*.

Many of the harassment and intimidation campaigns were organized by community groups with known ties to the CCP, fueled by nationalistic sentiments and misinformation from WeChat and Chinese-language media. Patriotic community members would organize petitions, social media attacks, and harassment against critics and critiques of the Chinese government.<sup>70 71 72</sup> Some have even offered free meals to sponsor pro-Beijing supporters to rally against Hong Kong pro-democracy activists.<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that while some of these activities are directed by the Chinese authorities, not all are. Many nationalists initiate these counter protests and harassment against CCP dissidents in a show of patriotism.

## Important Areas of Concern

Surveillance and intimidation of the diaspora community and dissidents is a new form of global authoritarianism. It allows for the Chinese party-state to extend their influence globally.

Law enforcement, whether local or federal, are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to identify and address foreign harassment. As it is not clearly defined under which agency is responsible for handling foreign harassment and intimidation cases, activists and dissidents are often bounced between enforcement agencies or receive the runaround when reporting these incidents.<sup>74</sup> This has caused significant anxiety among the dissident community.

Furthermore, policing and enforcement agencies have often dismissed the diaspora and dissident community's safety concerns as civil disputes, rather than addressing the issue of foreign influence operations.<sup>75</sup> As pervasive as these issues are, the lack of awareness and response are major barriers in protecting the Charter-guaranteed rights and freedom of Canadians.

It is challenging to fully grasp the scope of foreign harassment and intimidation in Canada without a national reporting mechanism. Activists and dissidents are given conflicting information by different agencies (municipal police, RCMP, or CSIS) and these agencies themselves do not know how to address foreign state harassment concerns.

Another issue is that counter protests or foreign state harassment is not seen as a crime by law enforcement agencies. These incidents are seen as singular events, rather than coordinated campaigns to silence dissent across Canada. This becomes tricky for law enforcement agencies

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<sup>70</sup> ['China is your daddy': Backlash against Tibetan student's election prompts questions about foreign influence](#) (14 February, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>71</sup> [Victims of foreign-state-sponsored harassment in Canada recount threats of rape, murder and harm to families](#) (26 November, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>72</sup> [Chinese students allege marginalization after SSMU statement on Hong Kong](#) (24 November, 2020). *The McGill Tribune*.

<sup>73</sup> [Richmond crepe restaurant offered free meals to rally protesters](#) (23 August, 2019). *Richmond News*.

<sup>74</sup> [Victims of foreign-state-sponsored harassment in Canada recount threats of rape, murder and harm to families](#) (26 September, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>75</sup> [Chinese-Canadians Fear China's Rising Clout Is Muzzling Them](#) (27 August, 2016). *The New York Times*.

as intervention could be seen as a violation of Canadian Charter. Law enforcement agencies may only intervene when there are significant safety concerns or potential physical harm.<sup>76 77</sup>

This speaks to a broader issue. Surveillance and intimidation should not be a criminal justice matter, but rather a foreign policy and domestic security problem. Furthermore, counter protests cannot be characterized as pro-democracy supporters vs pro-Beijing supporters. These counter protests are often well-coordinated foreign state influence operations that seek to suppress resistance and dissent abroad.<sup>78</sup>

Surveillance and intimidation are also not siloed to activists and at protests, but to other aspects of civil society. As noted above, disputes and physical intimidation occurred in high schools over support for the Hong Kong movement has prompted meetings to discuss safety concerns. However, municipal school administrations are woefully under-equipped to address specific geopolitical issues.<sup>79</sup>

## Information & Narrative Discursion Warfare

Over the past few decades, the CCP has used a more sophisticated information dissemination strategy aimed at international audiences. The Chinese authorities has been establishing a powerful global media narrative discursion strategy<sup>80</sup> to export its ideology, and “deter any criticism of itself and to cover up the darker chapters in its history”.<sup>81</sup> The objective is to counter and dilute criticisms with alternate stories and sow confusion through various soft power channels. Unaccustomed to a free press that can criticize authorities from any country, the regime holds a paranoid view that global opinions dominated by Western media outlets are disseminating “hostile” narratives about China,<sup>82</sup> and that Western countries “feel threatened by China’s success and use their media to try to sully [China’s] image”.<sup>83</sup> To tackle this perceived imbalance, media warfare has been an explicit part of Beijing’s military strategy.<sup>84</sup> The PRC is

<sup>76</sup> [Christian group says its religious rights were violated when pro-China supporters ‘surrounded’ church](#) (20 August, 2019). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>77</sup> [Canadian police go undercover as Hong Kong protest tensions rise in Richmond, the world’s most -Chinese city outside Asia](#) (4 October, 2019). *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>78</sup> [Report: National Security and Chinese State Influence](#) (17 August, 2020). *Alliance Canada Hong Kong*.

<sup>79</sup> [Hong Kong tensions trigger meetings with Canadian school principals, after anonymous pro-communist letter warns pupil of ‘consequences’](#) (7 December, 2019). *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>80</sup> The idea of the “China story” as a coherent narrative reflecting the Party-state agenda, as a product of centrally conceived “soft power,” has appeared in the Party’s official People’s Daily as early as 2004: [The Fable of the Master Storyteller](#) (29 September, 2017). *China Media Project*.

<sup>81</sup> [China’s Pursuit of a New World Media Order](#) (March, 2019). *Reporters without Borders*.

<sup>82</sup> [Head of Xinhua accuses Western media of pushing revolution in China](#) (4 September, 2013). *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>83</sup> [China’s Pursuit of a New World Media Order](#) (March, 2019), *Reporters without Borders*.

<sup>84</sup> [Inside China’s audacious global propaganda campaign](#) (7 December, 2018). *The Guardian*.



now one of the leading global powers in propaganda and misinformation campaigns.<sup>85</sup> <sup>86</sup> The Chinese party-state is actively dismantling journalism, capitalizing on the demise of Western news outlets, redefining journalism into “the media industry”, creating a Chinese social media empire, grooming web warriors to steer online discourse,<sup>87</sup> compromising social media influencers, and destroying the watchdog role journalists are meant to play.

Canada is not immune. Beijing has been exploiting the vulnerabilities in our shrinking newsrooms and media landscape to influence and assert their narratives to serve their interests and to “tell China’s story.”

## Methods

The CCP exerts its influence in Canadian media in the form of censorship, propaganda, and control over content-delivery systems<sup>88</sup> including control over media outlets, the entertainment industry,<sup>89</sup> and the frequent use of social media campaigns.<sup>90</sup> Simple, overt methods have included sponsored posts or advertorial inserts written by Chinese party-state media.<sup>91</sup> Other direct methods include running digital or print advertisements parroting party rhetoric<sup>92</sup> <sup>93</sup> purchased by groups closely tied to the Chinese authorities.

In the mainstream media, vocal supporters wooed through elite capture (see previous section) deliver Beijing’s messages in op-eds and media appearances, helping to sway popular perceptions.<sup>94</sup> Self-censorship of major publications is also prevalent because of worries about political and financial fallout.<sup>95</sup> A 2018 study published in *the Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* found that the coverage of China turned increasingly positive in three major newspapers (the *National Post*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*), even though repression in PRC deepened during those years.<sup>96</sup>

Activists can attest that censorship and propaganda is a serious issue in Canadian-Chinese media,<sup>97</sup> with many parroting official CCP positions. Some outlets would run content provided by the Chinese Consulates and the Embassy, marketing agencies they hired,<sup>98</sup> or invite Chinese

<sup>85</sup> [Influencing the Narrative: How the Chinese government mobilizes students and media to burnish its image](#). (December, 2019). *Research Gate*.

<sup>86</sup> [Army of Fake Fans boost China's messaging on Twitter](#) (12 May, 2021). *AP News*.

<sup>87</sup> [China's Communist Party Raises Army of Nationalist Trolls](#) (29 December, 2017), *Financial Times*.

<sup>88</sup> [Chinese Communist Party's Media Influence Expands Worldwide](#) (14 January, 2020). *Freedom House*.

<sup>89</sup> [Chinese tabloid blasts Canada over lobster dispute](#) (25 June, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>90</sup> [Army of Fake Fans Boosts China's Messaging on Twitter](#). (12 May, 2021) *Associated Press*.

<sup>91</sup> [Globe and Mail runs two pages of upbeat stories on China; the content is produced by the China Daily](#). (19 September, 2020), *Tweet by David Ljunggren @reutersLjunggren*.

<sup>92</sup> [Vancouver group runs newspaper ad praising controversial new security law in Hong Kong](#) (17 July, 2020), *National Post*.

<sup>93</sup> [Letters: Stop pro-CCP propaganda](#) (20 March, 2021), *Richmond News*.

<sup>94</sup> [Inside China's audacious global propaganda campaign](#) (7 December 2018), *The Guardian*.

<sup>95</sup> [Chinese-Canadians Fear China's Rising Cloud Is Muzzling Them](#) (27 August, 2016), *The New York Times*.

<sup>96</sup> [Canada's media is in thrall to China](#) (18 May, 2018), *Macleans*.

<sup>97</sup> [Inside Canada's Chinese-language media: 'Beijing has become the mainstream,' says ex-Sing Tao editor](#) (3 December, 2020), *National Post*.

<sup>98</sup> [Deafening Whispers. China's information Operation and Taiwan's 2020 Election](#) (23 October, 2020). *Doublethink Lab*.

diplomats to speak without follow-up or questioning even when they are making covert threats to Canadians of Chinese origin on-air.<sup>99</sup> There have been incidents with Chinese Consul Generals in Canada applying direct pressure to outlets to remove quotes critical of the CCP, or preventing publications of certain ads from Falun Gong.<sup>100</sup>

Chinese-Canadian journalists face job losses, death threats, online threats,<sup>101</sup> and threats to relatives in China for unfavourable coverage of Beijing.<sup>102</sup> Some prominent incidents include the firing of Kenneth Yau by Fairchild Radio's AM1430 station over his criticisms of Beijing,<sup>103</sup> the firing of Lei Jin after writing about the death of Chinese human rights advocate Liu Xiaobo in a Chinese prison,<sup>104</sup> and Anita Lee,<sup>105</sup> who appeared to have been let go after expressing support for protesters in Hong Kong.<sup>106</sup>

When the CCP can't control or influence, they purchase. One such deal was made by the president of the entertainment arm of Citic Group (China's biggest state-owned enterprise) when they bought shares of Global Chinese Press, one of the most prominent Chinese-language media outlets in Canada in 2004.<sup>107</sup>

They are also exporting training and journalists. Chinese party-state media such as People's Daily and Xinhua have bureaus operating in Canada, while CGTN is available on cable TV<sup>108</sup>. Meanwhile 2019's *Forum on the Global Chinese Language Media* featured attendees from 63 US, 51 Canadian and 37 Australian media groups.<sup>109</sup> Some of the attending Canadian groups include: *Ming Pao*, *Victoria Media* (加拿大维多利亚传媒) and *Sept Days Media* (七天传媒).<sup>110</sup>

The CCP have groomed an arsenal of free social media information disseminators at their disposal through the fueling of nationalism.<sup>111</sup> By weaponizing 'anti-China' accusations, the UFWD successfully leverages social media influencers and trolls<sup>112</sup> to do their bidding, mounting globalized harassment and disinformation campaigns against critics and dissidents. These UFWD activities will be covered in a later section.

<sup>99</sup> [Chinese diplomat accuses critics of sowing division among Chinese Canadian community](#) (28 July, 2020), *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>100</sup> [Chinese-Canadians Fear China's Rising Clout Is Muzzling Them](#) (27 August, 2016), *The New York Times*.

<sup>101</sup> [Chinese-Canadian reporter threatened and called a "whore" on Vancouver Stop Asian Hate rally organizer's WeChat group](#) (28 March, 2021). *ThinkPOL*.

<sup>102</sup> [Beijing tightening grip on Chinese-language media in Canada](#) (13 April, 2020), *True North Far East*.

<sup>103</sup> [Host on Chinese-language station in Toronto says he was fired for criticizing Beijing](#) (8 October, 2019), *National Post*.

<sup>104</sup> [Beijing expanding attempts to influence foreign media — including Canada's, report says](#) (15 January, 2020), *Toronto Star*.

<sup>105</sup> Vancouver based radio host Anita Lee's show on a Chinese Canadian radio station has been cancelled, after she played the de-facto protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" on her show: [Anita Lee shocked by the abrupt end of her Canadian radio show](#) (6 May, 2020). *Yahoo News*.

<sup>106</sup> [Host on Chinese-language station in Toronto says he was fired for criticizing Beijing](#) (8 October, 2019), *National Post*.

<sup>107</sup> [Who was Li Bolun? Disgraced Citic Media Mogul's Death leaves legacy of Litigation at Chinese Canadian Newspaper](#) (3 October, 2020) *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>108</sup> [Should Canada treat China's state media outlets as foreign missions? This MP wants to talk about it](#) (26 February, 2020). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>109</sup> [The 10th Global Chinese Language Media Forum Kicks off in Hebei](#) (12 October, 2019). *US News Express*.

<sup>110</sup> (Chinese) [Tenth Forum on the Global Chinese Language Media opens in Shijiazhuang \(media guest list included\)](#) (12 October, 2019). *San Diego Chinese Press*.

<sup>111</sup> [How Chinese nationalists weaponized 'anti-China' accusations to silence feminists](#) (12 May, 2021). *NBC News*.

<sup>112</sup> [China's Communist Party Raises Army of Nationalist Trolls](#) (29 December, 2017). *Financial Times*.



## Important Areas of Concern

Information operations are no longer only spearheaded by the Chinese authorities, they have evolved to involve various adversaries with different priorities and capacities that are influenced by politics, ideology, or capital. This makes propaganda increasingly hard to spot, as public relations firms, YouTubers, influencers, non-profit “patriotic” community groups, business entities, criminals, and politicians can all be tied to the Chinese party-state apparatus or parroting the official party narrative because it furthers their interests.<sup>113</sup>

This is further complicated by the lack of diasporic community penetration by mainstream Canadian media, and the significant hold on Chinese-language media and Chinese social media applications by the CCP. Several factors have created opportunities for the CCP to wield significant influence on Chinese-language media in Canada. Overall, Canadian newspapers, television and radio are underfunded, particularly ethnic media, resulting in major gaps in communication.

Additionally, Chinese and diaspora communities access information and communicate primarily through WeChat and other apps controlled by China. WeChat is among the top news sources for Chinese-Canadians<sup>114</sup> and social media apps may be the single most effective and concerning factor in the CCP’s arsenal over Canadian-Chinese language media, simply for the PRC’s direct ability to censor and monitor WeChat, Weibo, Youku, TikTok (Douyin) and other Chinese media entities.

The broader issue on a lack of oversight continues to allow the UFD to manipulate Chinese-language media, exploit vulnerabilities, threaten journalists, and target diaspora communities in Canada.

## Academic Influence & Vulnerability of Intellectual Property Transfer

Canadian education and research institutions are especially vulnerable to foreign influence due to the lack of awareness and inadequate federal regulations. The CCP utilizes capital and resources to influence various levels of Canadian education, from Canada’s school systems to academic institutions. Influence operations within Canadian education are not limited to harassment and intimidation of critics of Beijing; it also targets academic institutions for their research and development capabilities.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> [Deafening Whispers. China’s information Operation and Taiwan’s 2020 Election](#) (23 October, 2020), *Doublethink Lab*.

<sup>114</sup> [Vivintel offers media snapshot of Chinese Canadians](#) (18 November, 2020). *Media in Canada*.

<sup>115</sup> [Annual Report 2020](#) (18 December, 2020). *National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians*.

Beijing aims to influence the next generation of technologies to disrupt, dominate, and silence democratic nations, making it clear they do not intend to follow the international order or be a fair and transparent global partner.<sup>116</sup> The CCP has accelerated its strategic agenda<sup>117</sup> to purchase intellectual property and research<sup>118</sup> from academic institutions since the release of “Made in China 2025”, a state-led industrial ten-year plan that encourages foreign investment<sup>119</sup> and acquisition by the Chinese private sector.<sup>120</sup>

As part of Beijing’s mission for technological dominance, the PRC explicitly crafted policies to exploit and weaponize the global research community in targeted high-tech sectors. The aggressive ‘military-civil fusion’ strategy,<sup>121</sup> state subsidization of private companies<sup>122</sup> and ‘Thousand Talents Plan’ to recruit Canadian scientists<sup>123</sup> are a few examples of an underlying agenda to circumvent foreign military export restrictions.

Early reports note this new strategic plan aims to influence the next generation of technologies, from telecommunications to artificial intelligence. Various democratic nations, including Canada, have recorded notable cases of inadvertent knowledge transfers<sup>124</sup> <sup>125</sup> <sup>126</sup> and hacks,<sup>127</sup> <sup>128</sup> <sup>129</sup> <sup>130</sup> among other predatory practices during ‘research collaborations’, sometimes uncovered after-the-fact. Beijing’s new plan also signals a new phase in its grand strategy to subvert international systems.

## Methods

Academic interference from the CCP systematically exploits grey areas that lack clear regulation and guidelines, and cloaks its agenda within benign language such as ‘win-win collaboration’. One notable policy the Chinese party-state has begun to champion is “serving the nation from abroad”, to recruit an overseas network of researchers, scientists, and scholars in support of Beijing’s strategic goals.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> [1 in 5 corporations say China has stolen their IP within the last year: CNBC CFO survey](#) (1 March, 2019). *CNBC*.

<sup>117</sup> [Why China can't innovate](#) (March 2014). *Harvard Business Review*.

<sup>118</sup> [China Bets on Sensitive U.S. Start-Ups, Worrying the Pentagon](#) (22 March, 2017). *The New York Times*.

<sup>119</sup> [China Tech Investment Flying Under the Radar, Pentagon Warns](#) (7 April, 2017). *The New York Times*.

<sup>120</sup> [Is ‘Made in China 2025’ a Threat to Global Trade?](#) (13 May, 2019). *Council on Foreign Relations*.

<sup>121</sup> [Military-Civil Fusion and the People's Republic of China](#) (May 2020). *United States Department of State*.

<sup>122</sup> [How the state runs business in China](#) (25 July, 2019). *The Guardian*.

<sup>123</sup> [Morning Update: CSIS warns about Beijing's efforts to recruit Canadian scientists](#) (6 August, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>124</sup> [Exclusive: Did Huawei bring down Nortel? Corporate espionage, theft, and the parallel rise and fall of two telecom giants](#) (20 February, 2020). *National Post*.

<sup>125</sup> [Inside the Chinese military attack on Nortel](#) (25 August, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>126</sup> [How China Obtains American Trade Secrets](#) (15 January, 2020). *The New York Times*.

<sup>127</sup> [Exclusive: Suspected Chinese hackers used SolarWinds bug to spy on U.S. payroll agency— sources](#) (2 February, 2021). *Reuters*.

<sup>128</sup> [Suspected China Hack of Microsoft Shows Signs of Prior Reconnaissance](#) (7 April, 2021). *The Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>129</sup> [China hack cost Ottawa ‘hundreds of millions,’ documents show](#) (30 March, 2017). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>130</sup> [The Full Story of the Stunning RSA Hack Can Finally Be Told](#) (20 May, 2021). *Wired*.

<sup>131</sup> [Mapping China's Sprawling Efforts to Recruit Scientists](#) (30 November, 2020). *Defense One*.

There are various ways for the Chinese party-state and its affiliates to assert control over academia and research institutions, the easiest method of which is through funding and grant opportunities. They may also appeal to academics and researchers by offering raw materials or resources needed for their research. The initial agreement is often designed to be a “too good to be true” deal with seemingly minimal costs for the researchers, to bait them into compliance. Once the researchers establish a partnership with CCP’s affiliates, whether private or public actors, they often develop a dependency for funding and/or resources from their sponsor. Upon the renewal of the funding or partnership agreement, foreign state actors may request transfer of research findings, intellectual property, and/or other data from the research project. (See Appendix B - Interview #1) There is also deliberate targeting of legal loopholes and predatory collaborations that blur ethical and legal boundaries.<sup>132</sup>

Another key aspect of academic influence in Canada is the collaboration between Canadian education institutions and associations linked to the Chinese party-state apparatus, such as Confucius Institutes that are part of China’s Ministry of Education and are funded by the Chinese government.<sup>133</sup> <sup>134</sup> School board trustees, teachers, and district officials have been exposed for accepting all-expense paid trips to China from Hanban, the branch of the Chinese government that funds Confucius Institutes.<sup>135</sup> While some Confucius Institutes have since closed their doors,<sup>136</sup> many municipal school boards and post-secondary institutions are continuing their collaboration.<sup>137</sup> Opaque funding arrangements between Canadian institutions and Confucius Institutes have been a key concern. Teachers from the Confucius Institutes also spoke up about the strict censorship and discriminatory hiring practices for its instructors, and the institutes’ soft power influence over Canadian institutions.<sup>138</sup> Even private school teachers are warned to “tread carefully” when speaking about the CCP, Tiananmen Square, and the Dalai Lama.<sup>139</sup>

Various forms of self-censorship are also observed in Canadian academia, whether due to the influence of state-affiliated campus organizations, or fear of offending their Chinese funders. There have been recorded cases of Chinese students requesting “sensitive” materials to be removed from campus and demanding administration to cancel events.<sup>140</sup>

Canadian universities are also vulnerable to surveillance and intimidation operations against dissidents of the Chinese regime. Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) are

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<sup>132</sup> [University Researcher Sentenced to Prison for Lying on Grant Applications to Develop Scientific Expertise for China](#) (14 May, 2021). *United States Department of Justice*.

<sup>133</sup> [How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms](#) (16 January, 2018). *Politico*.

<sup>134</sup> [Some Canadian schools see China's Confucius Institute as a handy teaching tool. Others reject it as propaganda](#) (1 December, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>135</sup> [Cogitlam school trustees' free trips to China raise ethical concerns](#) (9 December, 2017). *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>136</sup> [Chinese culture program removed from 18 New Brunswick schools](#) (26 August, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>137</sup> [Universities, school boards across Canada defend ties with China's Confucius Institute](#) (21 October, 2019). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>138</sup> [Chinese government's Confucius Institute holds sway on Canadian campuses, contracts indicate](#) (11 March, 2020). *The National Post*.

<sup>139</sup> [Teachers at new Richmond private school told to 'tread lightly'](#) (14 April, 2021). *Richmond News*.

<sup>140</sup> [A Preliminary Study of PRC Political Influence and Interference Activities In American Higher Education](#). (August 2018). *The Wilson Centre*.

known to have ties to the Chinese party-state apparatus,<sup>141</sup> <sup>142</sup> <sup>143</sup> and have mobilized activities on campus that target speakers,<sup>144</sup> events, student leaders,<sup>145</sup> and activities critical of the CCP.<sup>146</sup> <sup>147</sup>

## Important Areas of Concern

The issue of intellectual property transfer is not confined to academia; the private sector is also vulnerable to espionage.<sup>148</sup> However, Canadian universities are hubs for research and innovation, contributing to advances in both academia and the private sector, which is making them an ideal target for the CCP.

The often-benign appearance of collaborative opportunities with foreign actors, combined with inadequate federal guidelines and monitoring mechanisms ripen the conditions for hostile dependence.<sup>149</sup> Since many cases of academic influence and intellectual property transfer are not publicly disclosed, the pervasiveness of academic interference is not well known. Without clear reporting, regulations, and guidelines, continued partnership with Chinese state actors and its affiliates pose a significant national security risk.<sup>150</sup> <sup>151</sup>

Similar to concerns from political influence and elite capture operations, individuals may choose to self-censor in exchange for continued financial support or collaboration. The asymmetric power distribution in funding agreements plays a role, Canadian researchers lose their intellectual property to foreign funders even though their research is partly funded by the Canadian government.<sup>152</sup> Ludicrous funding opportunities that trap academics and researchers into long-term coercive relationships with these foreign funders is one of the tactics observed (See Appendix B - Interview #1).

Various Canadian universities are known to collaborate with potentially compromising entities like the People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>153</sup> Canadian institutions' "don't understand China's efforts to blur the lines between civilian and military research... and aren't cognisant of the strategic implications of the Chinese military's modernisation..." , as described by Alex Joske.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>141</sup> [Beijing-linked student groups threaten academic freedom in Canada](#) (19 January, 2021). *True North, Far East*.

<sup>142</sup> [Chinese Government Gave Money to Georgetown Chinese Student Group](#) (14 February, 2018). *Foreign Policy*.

<sup>143</sup> [The Chinese Communist Party Is Setting Up Cells at Universities Across America](#) (18 April, 2018). *Foreign Policy*.

<sup>144</sup> [Activist accuses Chinese government of meddling after McMaster speech disrupted](#) (15 February, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>145</sup> [China denies role in backlash against Tibetan student's election at U of T](#) (15 February, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>146</sup> [McMaster student government bans Chinese students' group from campus](#) (26 September, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>147</sup> [The lonely Goddess: A lost memory of Tiananmen hides in plain sight on UBC campus](#) (29 May, 2018). *The Ubysey*.

<sup>148</sup> [U.S. rebukes Canada over Chinese takeover of Norsat](#) (12 June, 2017). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>149</sup> [University of Alberta forges close research ties with China despite warnings from intelligence agencies](#) (3 May, 2021). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>150</sup> [China's military scientists target Canadian universities](#) (29 October, 2018). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>151</sup> [Experts call on Canadian universities to close off China's access to sensitive research](#) (15 September, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>152</sup> [Unclear intellectual property rules put Canada at risk amid higher threat of foreign takeovers: experts](#) (16 June, 2020). *The National Post*.

<sup>153</sup> This report outlines the Chinese military's collaborations with foreign universities: [Picking Flowers, Making Honey](#) (30 October, 2018). *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*.

<sup>154</sup> [Western universities urged to rethink Chinese military ties](#) (8 November, 2018). *World Universities Ranking*.

Spotting these links between Western universities and the PLA is made difficult by the lengths that researchers will take to obscure their military affiliations.<sup>155</sup> In some cases, the English-language websites of the authors' university departments do not disclose defense-related subdivisions.

Addressing these potentially compromising collaborations is further complicated by uncertainty of who is ultimately responsible for these collaborations. Universities have repeatedly asked for the federal government to give them more parameters on collaborating with foreign states and companies.

In other aspects of academic influence, Confucius Institute and CSSAs have been identified as a key part of the Chinese party-state's soft power infrastructure overseas.<sup>156</sup> <sup>157</sup> CSIS has raised attention on Confucius Institutes, who are allowed direct access to young Canadians.<sup>158</sup> Canadian families have called attention to potential propaganda, where teachers and students are not allowed to discuss the Chinese authoritarian government and its human rights violations.<sup>159</sup> While CSSAs have been identified as connected to the Chinese state apparatus, they are also funded and operated within Canadian campuses. CSSAs have been shown to routinely coordinate with the Chinese Consulates and the Embassy<sup>160</sup> — a claim they have vehemently denied — to suppress freedom of expression, and harass, intimidate, and surveil ethnic-Chinese student activists.<sup>161</sup> On its Chinese-language website, the University of Alberta's CSSA stated that it was established by the Chinese Consulate, while the English version makes no such mention.<sup>162</sup>

## National Security

It is evident that national security threats are embedded in every aspect of foreign influence and interference operations, as outlined earlier in this report. CSIS Director David Vigneault has publicly identified China as a serious strategic threat to Canada on multiple occasions in the past two years. This is unusual for CSIS, which regularly refrains from commenting publicly.<sup>163</sup>  
<sup>164</sup>

Per the 2018 CSIS Public Report, China attempts to achieve its agenda via commercial means and local influence networking. It is important to note that private and state-owned enterprises

<sup>155</sup> [Prosecutors say S.F. consulate is harboring Chinese military researcher wanted by FBI](#) (22 July, 2019). *Axios*.

<sup>156</sup> [The Insidious Threat of China's Confucius Institutes](#) (10 March, 2021). *National Review*.

<sup>157</sup> [Beijing used influence over B.C. schools to push its agenda and keep tabs on Canadian politics, documents show](#) (15 October, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>158</sup> [Daphne Bramham: It's time to toss the Confucius Institute out of B.C. schools](#) (12 July, 2019). *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>159</sup> [Confucius Institute a brainwashing program, say parents who pulled daughter from class](#) (8 April, 2019). *CBC*.

<sup>160</sup> [OPINION: Having Chinese diplomats on our campus is alarming](#) (14 November, 2019). *The Silhouette*.

<sup>161</sup> [China's Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States](#) (24 August, 2018). *US-China Economic and Security Review Commission*.

<sup>162</sup> [Annual Report 2020](#) (18 December, 2020). *National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians*.

<sup>163</sup> [China poses serious strategic threat to Canada, says Canadian spy agency head](#) (9 February, 2021). *Reuters*.

<sup>164</sup> [Why CSIS believes Canada is a 'permissive target' for China's interference](#) (24 June, 2020). *Global News*.

are all heavily influenced under the CCP's mandate. China's National Intelligence Law (2017) stipulates that Chinese entities — including individuals, as well as public and private sectors operating outside of China — are obliged to comply with the PRC's intelligence services.<sup>165</sup> Consequently, the CCP's widespread presence and all-encompassing legal framework poses a threat to Canada's national security and intelligence. The CCP's access to infrastructure, technologies, and business resources further adds to its commercial influence.<sup>166</sup>

## Methods

While some foreign influence activities have occurred under ignorance or voluntary actors, it is impossible to overlook the foreign interference operations that take place under paid state and non-state actors.

Beijing attempts to advance its agenda through a policy of “economic imperialism”; it relies on the ownership of resources and infrastructure as leverage for political influence. The tactic of “debt-trap diplomacy” associated with China's Belt and Road Initiative is characteristic of such economic manipulation.

The Chinese authorities are also known for carrying out clandestine operations in Canada, most notably Operation Fox Hunt, which targets Chinese critics of Beijing.<sup>167</sup> Under the guise of an anti-corruption campaign, Chinese party-state actors would pressure Chinese dissidents to return to China by targeting their loved ones abroad<sup>168</sup>, including here in Canada.

The CCP has also employed more covert methods to influence all levels of Canadian political institutions, as discussed above. David McGuinty, chair of the national security and intelligence committee, remarked that Canada is particularly vulnerable to the Chinese influence due to the CCP's “sweetheart deals” with business leaders and political officials. Over the years, many Chinese companies have won contracting bids<sup>169</sup> from the federal government, raising concerns from the national security and dissident communities.<sup>170 171</sup>

Chinese party-state actors will also resort to more forceful tactics, if need be. These tactics include arbitrary detention and pressure from the Chinese officials.<sup>172</sup> The starkest example of arbitrary detention would be the case of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, engaging in hostage diplomacy. Arbitrary detention is not a novel tactic; there have been well documented

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<sup>165</sup> [2018 CSIS Public Report](#). Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

<sup>166</sup> [Rethinking Security: China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry](#) (2 May, 2018). Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

<sup>167</sup> [CSIS warns China's Operation Fox Hunt is targeting Canada's Chinese community](#) (20 November, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>168</sup> [China sent fugitive's elderly father to America to coerce him into going home, US claims](#) (29 October, 2020). *CNN*.

<sup>169</sup> [Canadian government has spent nearly \\$6M on Chinese contracts since two Michaels were arrested](#) (28 April, 2021).

*National Post*.

<sup>170</sup> [Chinese government-owned firm wins \\$6.8M contract to supply security equipment to Canada's embassies](#) (16 July, 2020).

*The National Post*.

<sup>171</sup> [Canada paid nearly \\$200M to visa company previously based in a tax haven and linked to China](#) (12 January, 2021). *Global News*.

<sup>172</sup> [Chinese envoy says Canada's acceptance of Hong Kong refugees jeopardizes Canadians in former British colony](#) (15 October, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.



cases in the past such as Huseyincan Celil,<sup>173</sup> as well as Kevin and Julia Garratt,<sup>174</sup>. In 2015, then-BC Liberal MLA Richard Lee was detained by Chinese authorities at the Shanghai airport; after eight hours, he was denied a travel visa and ordered to fly back to Canada.<sup>175</sup>

Many have called attention to the significant staff numbers at Chinese consulates and the embassy in Canada,<sup>176</sup> which far exceeds any other government's missions. Many experts have suspected the consulate and embassy staff to be involved in influence and interference operations, as consulates and the embassy have close collaborations with local community organizations.<sup>177</sup>

The Canadian cyberspace is also vulnerable to CCP and poses a national security concern. Chinese-owned social media applications (such as WeChat and TikTok) are tools for the Chinese authorities to freely extract information and user data.<sup>178</sup> US court documents have also revealed that undercover military researchers communicate with Chinese embassies through WeChat.<sup>179</sup> More concerning, WeChat is compelled to hand over data access when requested by China<sup>180</sup> and it has been shown to exploit international users in training up surveillance capabilities.<sup>181</sup>

## Important Areas of Concern

As it currently stands, Canada's criminal justice system and intelligence community are inadequate to deal with foreign interference and influence operations. Foreign influence and interference operations often take place under legal grey areas, making it extraordinarily difficult to arrest, charge, and convict those operating. The *Security of Information Act* covers only a narrow scope of threats to national security, namely espionage. There has only been one conviction so far.<sup>182</sup> Cameron Jay Ortis, a senior RCMP official accused of breaching the Act, is set to go on trial in 2022.<sup>183</sup>

Qing Quentin Huang, an employee of Lloyd's Register, a subcontractor to Irving Shipbuilding Inc, was charged under the Security of Information Act. In 2020, federal prosecutors stayed two

<sup>173</sup> [Wife of Canadian citizen jailed 13 years in China fears he's been 'forgotten' amid Huawei crisis](#) (24 January, 2019). *Global News*.

<sup>174</sup> [Kevin and Julia Garratt on their experience as detainees in China](#) (29 January, 2019). *BBC News*.

<sup>175</sup> Richard Lee - MLA BC who was detained in Shanghai (he had attended Tiananmen memorials in Canada): [B.C. politician breaks silence: China detained me, is interfering 'in our democracy'](#) (29 November, 2019). *Global News*.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Fadden spoke about the significant staff numbers of the Chinese Consulates and Embassy in Canada': [Meeting 25: Special Committee on Canada-China Relations](#) (3 May, 2021). *House of Commons*.

<sup>177</sup> [China's Vancouver consulate recruits volunteer corps, raising concerns of foreign interference in city](#) (19 December, 2019). *The National Post*.

<sup>178</sup> [China Issues New Measures on Cybersecurity Review of Network Products and Services](#) (27 April, 2020). *Covington & Burlington LLP*.

<sup>179</sup> [Forget TikTok. China's Powerhouse App Is WeChat, and Its Power Is Sweeping](#) (4 September, 2020). *The New York Times*.

<sup>180</sup> [China Intercepts WeChat Texts From U.S. And Abroad, Researchers Say](#) (29 August, 2019). *NPR*.

<sup>181</sup> We Chat, They Watch: How International Users Unwittingly Build up WeChat's Chinese Censorship Apparatus (7 May, 2020). *The Citizen Lab*.

<sup>182</sup> [Canadian spy Jeffrey Delisle gets 20 years for selling secrets to Russia](#) (8 February, 2013). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>183</sup> [RCMP official accused of leaking secrets goes to trial in September 2022](#) (9 April, 2021). *CBC*.

of four criminal charges against Huang who was accused of offering secrets about the Royal Canadian Navy to China. Huang still faces trial for two criminal counts.<sup>184</sup>

The foreign acquisition of Canadian infrastructure can potentially compromise Canada's national security and intelligence, allowing access by other countries such as China. A prime example is the current agreement between the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) and the Port of Sydney on Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where CCCC will invest, design, and develop a new container terminal there.<sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup> CCCC is one of 24 companies that were blacklisted by the United States.<sup>187</sup> This is a geopolitically strategic location that facilitates access between Europe and Canada, and the completion of such a port by China - and therefore, access to Canadian infrastructure - will allow it to become a key player in this area. Additionally, there are also sister agreements between Cape Breton Regional Municipality and Dalian<sup>188</sup>, as well as Nova Scotia and the Chinese province of Fujian.<sup>189</sup> However, municipalities and provincial governments may be unaware of the national security risks associated with these types of agreements (see Appendix B - Interview #2). Moreover, municipalities and provincial governments face trade-offs between economic benefits and national security risks. Chinese investment is significant, especially for regions with struggling economies.

By examining the Port of Sydney agreement in the larger context of China's economic imperialism, it is evident that Canada's susceptibility to China's methods is alarming. Whereas a typical port lease involving public-private collaboration lasts up to 50 years, the 99-year agreement between the Port of Sydney and CCCC is a significant anomaly.<sup>190</sup> In fact, 99-year leases on ports are uniquely characteristic of Chinese companies; when the Port of Darwin, Australia, entered into a 99-year lease with the Chinese company Landbridge, then-President Barack Obama expressed concerns over the company's ties with the Chinese military.<sup>191</sup> Similarly, a lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port indebted the country, giving China more power and momentum to conduct its Belt and Road initiative across the Indian Ocean.<sup>192</sup> That the Port of Sydney agreement is not subject to more scrutiny is concerning, and is also indicative of weaknesses in Canada's national security under the PRC's economic coercion.

Canadian institutions - in particular, research institutions - are another point of vulnerability for Canada's national security. More concerningly, these institutions are not equipped with the knowledge or resources to identify or understand what constitutes a national security risk or threat.

One illustrative example is the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg. CSIS became alarmed about the people that researcher Dr. Xiangguo Qiu talked to in China, and

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<sup>184</sup> [Prosecutors stay charges against Qing Quentin Huang in probe of naval leaks to China](#) (18 September, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>185</sup> [99-Year Leases and Chinese Port Investment](#) (28 March, 2018). *Cape Breton Spectator*.

<sup>186</sup> [Agreement with Chinese firm on development of port of Sydney announced](#) (8 December, 2015). *Saltwire*.

<sup>187</sup> [US sanctions over South China Sea will not affect blacklisted Chinese construction giant CCCC, company says](#) (31 August, 2020). *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>188</sup> [Cape Breton Regional Municipality twins with Chinese city](#) (16 December, 2015). *CBC*.

<sup>189</sup> [Province Signs Sister Agreement with Fujian, China](#) (21 December, 2020). *Government of Nova Scotia*.

<sup>190</sup> [99-Year Leases and Chinese Port Investments](#) (28 March, 2018). *The Cape Breton Spectator*.

<sup>191</sup> [Concerns Raised As Australian Port Rolls Out Red Carpet for Chinese Investment](#) (02 February, 2019). *JAPAN Forward*.

<sup>192</sup> [China signs 99-year lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port](#) (11 December, 2017). *Financial Times*.



consequently, intellectual property that may have been handed over to Chinese authorities. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) terminated the employment of Qiu and her husband, Keding Cheng. It was also discovered that one of the Chinese researchers who had worked at NML was Feihu Tan from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Academic of Military Medical Sciences.<sup>193</sup> According to research by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), the Academy of Military Medical Sciences is ranked as “very high risk” for potential leverage by the PLA or security agencies for surveillance, human-rights abuses or military purposes.<sup>194</sup>

In March this year, the Chinese government announced their intention for the “Polar Silk Road”<sup>195</sup> initiative between 2021 and 2025.<sup>196</sup> These developmental projects in the north have been identified as part of China's strategic economic and trade development, a key focus area of China's controversial Belt and Road Initiative. The initiative would enable China's access to resources and new shipping routes in the Arctic, which has been in ongoing discussions by the Chinese authorities since 2017.<sup>197</sup>

This section has outlined some examples of national security concerns that have been made known to the public, but they are not and should not be treated as isolated incidents. In CSIS's 2020 Public Report, China was explicitly named under espionage and foreign interference: “An example of significant concern are activities by threat actors affiliated with the People's Republic of China that seek to leverage and exploit critical freedoms that are otherwise protected by Canadian society and the Government in order to further the political interests of the Communist Party of China.” There are no transparency measures that expose foreign actors and their activities in Canada. China and other hostile foreign states have employed increasingly sophisticated tactics, and Canada's domestic policies and agencies are inadequate to detect foreign influence and interference operations that also pose national security concerns.

## United Front Work Department

The United Front Work Department (UFWD) is an official department of the CCP established in 1979 under then-paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. It has since seen renewed energy under President Xi Jinping, who has upgraded its status as one of the primary objectives in his administration, expanding it with the addition of a Xinjiang bureau.<sup>198</sup> The UFWD is composed of nine bureaus with overlapping responsibilities, each reflecting areas of perceived threat to CCP power; multiple bureaus are dedicated to maintaining loyalty and quieting dissent including Taiwan and overseas Chinese, while others are dedicated to PRC-controlled regions such as Hong Kong, Macau, Tibet, and East Turkestan. The UFWD is one of the key components to

<sup>193</sup> [Infectious-disease scientists at Canada's high-security lab collaborated with China](#) (20 May, 2021). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>194</sup> [China Defence Universities Tracker](#) (25 November, 2019). *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*.

<sup>195</sup> [China's "Arctic Silk Road"](#) (10 January, 2010). *The Maritimes Executive*.

<sup>196</sup> [China pledges to build 'Polar Silk Road' over 2021-2025](#) (4 March, 2021). *Reuters*.

<sup>197</sup> [Canada welcomes China's plan to build a "Polar Silk Road" in the Arctic](#) (11 July, 2017). *Vice*.

<sup>198</sup> [Inside China's secret 'magic weapon' for worldwide influence](#) (25 Oct, 2017). *Financial Times*.

China's success in swaying public opinion and establishing influencer networks beyond its borders.

Investigations revealed that UFWD operations in several countries were directed from the heart of Beijing, with the goals to charm, co-opt or attack well-defined groups and individuals. The United Front (UF) influences targets through ideological, emotional, and material means. Although a Party branch, the UFWD personnel in recent years has gained significant assignments in the Chinese administration; it is understood that almost all Chinese embassies now include staff formally tasked with United Front work.

Traditional and crude tools from the UFWD included domestic censorship, official complaints to a news organisation's headquarters and expelling correspondents from mainland China. However, throughout the last two decades, the UFWD has evolved into more sophisticated and subtle means of influence, such as astroturfing in local media, creating or co-opting local diaspora and student groups, targeting dissent in the diaspora by promoting loyalty, and elite capture. Supported by a more effective Chinese party-state media in reshaping the global information environment, the UFWD is an insidious threat to political and public opinion influence in Canada and other western liberal democracies.

## Methods

In Canada, a mix of grassroots and media strategies is used by the UFWD to control public opinion regarding China. The United Front has created and mobilized shell groups, registered NGOs, and civil societies in Canada. These groups are designed to mimic legitimate community programs and activities in democratic societies, or to promote "Chinese" culture. They purport as non-partisan and non-political entities while aggressively spreading pro-Beijing message and party lines, whether in praising Hong Kong's national security law<sup>199</sup> or condemning dissent against the Beijing Olympics.<sup>200 201</sup> During critical moments of public opinion, these UF groups have purchased full page advertisements in Chinese language and local municipal newspapers in Canada, reinforcing Beijing's narratives while circumventing the scrutiny of national or mainstream media.<sup>202 203</sup>

These UF networks have also demonstrated their mobilizing power, as seen in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, where Chinese community organizations with ties to the consulate

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<sup>199</sup> "The National Congress of Chinese Canadians (NCCC), along with the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver, have both publicly supported [the national security] law" [Timmy Wong: Chinese-Canadian groups that support Hong Kong's National Security Law do not represent all Chinese-Canadians](#) (5 August, 2020). *The Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>200</sup> A two-page ad in the Richmond News taken out by the Richmond-based Canadian Alliance of Chinese Associations (CACA), stating that its members "strongly oppose and condemn any boycott of the Beijing Olympics Games." [Debate over boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics hits home in Richmond](#) (19 March, 2021). *Richmond News*.

<sup>201</sup> Advertisement in the Vancouver Sun supporting the Beijing Olympics: [Open Letter: Supporting the Beijing Winter Olympics benefits all athletes and beyond](#) (12 March, 2021). *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>202</sup> [Canadian ads blasted Hong Kong 'radicals', invoking blood loyalty to China. Was Beijing's United Front involved?](#) (06 Jul, 2019). *South China Morning Post*.

<sup>203</sup> [Vancouver group runs newspaper ad praising controversial new security law in Hong Kong](#) (17 July, 2020). *National Post*.

were mobilized to purchase personal protective equipment to be sent to China.<sup>204</sup> As previously mentioned, UF groups also give weight to CCP narratives by giving statements and media interviews, often presenting themselves as representatives of the Chinese community.<sup>205</sup> This “astroturfing” creates a false perception that these groups are grassroots and community-based, when in fact their operations are coordinated by the Consulates and the Embassy’s liaisons. In addition to “community groups”, CSSAs and Confucius Institutes are also part of the UF apparatus.

In other attempts to galvanize public opinion, the United Front has hired actors to demonstrate and show “local support” for Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou outside the Vancouver Law Courts.<sup>206</sup> Previous sections outlined narrative discursive strategies, and these campaigns are carried out by the United Front. In the recent boycott of companies distancing themselves from Xinjiang cotton for links to abuse, the incident itself was sparked domestically by a social media post by the Communist Youth League,<sup>207</sup> and within hours the international facing state media Global Times and China Daily captured the narrative and published editorials that attacked said companies and praised Chinese firms that declare their use of Xinjiang cotton.<sup>208 209</sup>

The UFWD runs the China News Service, an extensive media network with dozens of overseas bureaus. Their articles are re-published by overseas news outlets directly owned by UFWD, and by WeChat social media accounts that operate in all Five Eyes countries, the European Union, Russia, Japan, and Brazil.<sup>210</sup> Beijing is estimated to spend up to \$10 billion a year in expanding its “soft power”, with international media being part of its portfolio.<sup>211</sup> Previously mentioned, the China News Service engages with foreign media through its biennial Forum on the Global Chinese Language Media. In 2019, it held a training class called “How to tell the Belt and Road Initiative’s story well”.<sup>212</sup> Multiple sources have noted that Beijing has significant influence over, if not directly owns, the majority of overseas Chinese-language media.<sup>213 214 215 216</sup>

<sup>204</sup> [United Front groups in Canada helped Beijing stockpile coronavirus safety supplies](#) (30 April, 2020). *Global News*.

<sup>205</sup> [Vancouver rally highlights local divide over China's national security law in Hong Kong](#) (31 July, 2020). *CBC*.

<sup>206</sup> [‘What am I protesting? What am I doing here?’ How one young woman says she got roped into protesting at the Meng Wanzhou trial](#) (31 January, 2020). *Toronto Star*.

<sup>207</sup> [Xinjiang cotton could portend a US-China consumer decoupling](#) (25 March, 2021). *Quartz*

<sup>208</sup> [Chinese State Media Fuels Backlash Against Nike, H&M And Others Over Xinjiang ‘Forced Labor’ Statements](#) (25 Mar, 2021). *Forbes*.

<sup>209</sup> [Xinjiang cotton signals long, hard China-US ideological fight: Global Times editorial](#) (25 March, 2021). *Global Times*.

<sup>210</sup> [The party speaks for you: Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist Party’s united front system](#) (9 June, 2020). *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*.

<sup>211</sup> [China is spending billions to make the world love it](#) (25 March, 2017). *The Economist*.

<sup>212</sup> (Chinese) [Tenth Forum on the Global Chinese Language Media opens in Shijiazhuang \(media guest list included\)](#) (12 October, 2019). *San Diego Chinese Press*.

<sup>213</sup> [Special Report 2020: Beijing’s Global Megaphone](#) (2020). *Freedom House*.

<sup>214</sup> “Beijing has become the mainstream now in Chinese newspapers here,” he said. “I cannot find a real independent and non-partisan newspaper here reporting Chinese affairs. I cannot find one for you.” said ex-Sing Tao editor Victor Ho. [Inside Canada’s Chinese-language media: ‘Beijing has become the mainstream,’ says ex-Sing Tao editor](#) (03 December, 2020). *National Post*.

<sup>215</sup> The influence exerted by Beijing over Chinese associations and media in Australia has grown appreciably since the late 1990s, and Beijing is understood to be in control of the majority of the local Chinese-language media. [Inside China’s secret ‘magic weapon’ for worldwide influence](#) (25 October, 2017). *Financial Times*.

<sup>216</sup> “Most of the Chinese-language media in Canada are now owned by businesses tied to Beijing, offering positive coverage of China, while Chinese-Canadian community groups have largely fallen under the sway of the “motherland,” [How China uses shadowy United Front as ‘magic weapon’ to try to extend its influence in Canada](#) (28 January, 2019). *National Post*.

In addition to UFWD's influence operations, it also serves as a surveillance and policing agency of Chinese and diaspora communities, taking place through digital surveillance (such as WeChat and Weibo), and via their established network of community groups, private businesses, and individuals.<sup>217</sup> In many cases, the ethnic-Chinese community members are expected to demonstrate their loyalty by donating, volunteering, and supporting the UF activities.

## Important Areas of Concern

The UFWD has disguised their operations under the pretense of ethnic-Chinese community engagement and are observed to be increasingly sophisticated in their tactics. Even if given the opportunity, many are unable to differentiate between goodwill engagement from foreign interference. Without transparency mechanisms, there are no reliable ways for Canadian institutions to identify foreign actors, especially organizations or individuals that may have deliberately hidden their background or affiliations.

UFWD exerts influence in Canadian institutions and overseas communities through UF organizations and Chinese party-state affiliates, often employing coercive and corrupted tactics to influence and interfere with Canadian society. A key objective of UF work is to establish the sole narrative of China as one that is aligned with the party line. While some may consider these UF tactics as exercises of freedom of expression in liberal democracies, it is important to note that the CCP's UF activities are covert and coercive, and actively restricting the diaspora and local community members from public expression that deviates from the party line.

It also appears there may be collaboration between like-minded foreign authoritarian states in Beijing's media strategy. In consolidating international state media narratives, China and Russia had agreed to publish material approved by the partner's government since 2015; Chinese entities included in the agreement are CGTN, Global Times, and Xinhua.<sup>218</sup> China's party-state media is also seen to be more assertive in its Russian-like misinformation approach.

## Recommendations

Beijing is undoubtedly engaging in foreign influence operations within Canada. Their operations are becoming increasingly sophisticated and have only intensified under Xi Jinping's regime. The concerns outlined in this report are limited by the lack of reporting and transparency mechanisms that centralizes data and information regarding foreign state influence. Other

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<sup>217</sup> [Harassment & Intimidation of individuals in Canada working on China-related human rights concerns](#) (March 2020). *Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China & Amnesty International Canada.*

<sup>218</sup> [Chinese and Russian media partner to "tell each other's stories well"](#) (22 December, 2020). *Mercator Institute for China Studies.*

countries, notably Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, who have also been recorded carrying out similar operations as the Chinese authorities.<sup>219</sup>

The recommendations provided below centers an anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens. It is imperative to not disguise discriminatory and prejudicial policies as actions that will protect Canadian sovereignty. While the report has outlined how the Chinese authorities deploy various tactics and strategies to mobilize Canadian-Chinese communities, overreaching and blanket policies may cause harm to not only ethnically-Chinese communities, but also the Asian diaspora in Canada.

## Current Limitations

Currently, Canada does not have a legislative framework to address the issues concerning foreign state influence and interference.

- **Lines between foreign influence and foreign interference are being increasingly blurred.**

Placing the onus on the criminal justice system to address foreign influence and interference is ineffective. Foreign influence and interference often operate in the legal grey zones and will be difficult to address with legal measures.

- **Existing infrastructures in Canada are ill-equipped to address foreign state influence and interference today.**

These operations have rapidly evolved and are ever changing. While some existing infrastructures can be amended to respond to foreign influence, we need significant changes in the strategic and operational levels of government.

## Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme & Public Commission on Foreign Influence

Canada currently does not have a foreign influence transparency scheme. Australia has recently updated their transparency scheme<sup>220</sup>, while the United Kingdom is seeking to propose legislation to create their own scheme.<sup>221</sup>

**ACHK recommends the Government of Canada to consider:**

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<sup>219</sup> [China, Russia conducting 'brazen' interference in Canada, intelligence committee warns](#) (13 March, 2020). *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>220</sup> [Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018](#) (6 April, 2019). *Australian Government*.

<sup>221</sup> [Foreign Interference Unchecked: Models for U.K. Foreign Lobbying Act](#) (10 February, 2021). *The Henry Jackson Society*.

- Creating a foreign influence transparency scheme encompasses the need for a public registry, accompanied with investigative and enforcement powers
- Creating a public commission that serves as a centralized coordination office between all levels of government, different agencies, Canadian institutions, and the public

## Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme

The transparency scheme creates a public registry of individuals, organizations, and representatives who are actively acting on behalf of foreign states and their affiliates in Canada.

- The public registry is a source of information for Canadians who are seeking collaboration with foreign funders, to ensure Canadians are provided appropriate information and able to make informed decisions.
- A public registry is also a deterrent for foreign actors, who may be wary of their activities being exposed to the public's view.
- In addition to the creation of a legislative framework that enables a public registry, it must be paired with investigative and enforcement powers to ensure foreign actors are registered appropriately.
- The scheme should be paired with amendment to existing legislations and policy changes to address non-compliance, such as revoking charitable status or banning from applying for government funding.

Most importantly, foreign actors and their affiliates are held accountable if found to be in violation. The new legislation will need to establish administrative and operations of a public commission that incorporates the responsibilities as outlined above.

## Public Commission on Foreign Influence

ACHK recommends this commission be a centralized point of contact for both government and non-government actors in Canada.

**Some of the commission's responsibilities should include:**

- Advise and support the provincial, territorial, regional, municipal, Indigenous and other governing bodies of Canada.
- Host educational and information sessions for stakeholders like Canadian agencies and institutions.
- Collect data on foreign influence and allow a public reporting mechanism with multi-lingual access, as diasporic communities have been facing the forefront of foreign influence and interference operations.
- Initiate public inquiries into foreign state influence and interference operations with Canadian institutions, including but not limited to political and civil institutions, private

sector, academia, Canadian research and innovation, charities and non-governmental organizations, etc...

- Enforcement powers that allow the commission to hold foreign actors accountable who fail to comply with the transparency scheme, such as issuing fines, revoking charitable status, and being banned from applying for government funding.
- Work with relevant stakeholders to develop standards and guidelines for collaborations with foreign actors, not limited to research, exports, and investments.

## Rationale

The network of foreign influence cannot be addressed without transparency and public awareness. As the public facing arm, this commission can coordinate between relevant agencies and provide public reporting of the transparency registry, investigations, punitive measures, and annual data. Leveraging public reporting as an accountability measure, the foreign influence transparency scheme is both a deterrence and an enforceable measure that ensures malicious actors are held accountable.

The commission's coordination with the public should include protective and counter-surveillance support for community members who are facing harassment and threats from foreign state actors. No matter the severity of incidents, they infringe on Canadians and their families' basic human rights. While many of these incidents are not considered to be criminal or illegal affairs, they should be investigated and recorded rigorously. We need to build the communities' resiliency against foreign state harassment operations, which has not only impacted dissidents of the CCP, but also impacted the Hong Konger, Chinese, Tibetan, and Uyghur diaspora overall.

## Supporting Canadian Research & Intellectual Property Rights

Canadian research and innovation should not be funneled into the foreign state military and national security enforcement agencies.

## Cohesive Federal Policy

We need a cohesive federal policy to regulate collaboration with foreign entities; not only in academia, but also in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. The commission may provide supplementary lists that outline foreign entities that are known for their human rights abuses or national security risks, which would further inform Canadian stakeholders who wish to enter collaboration with foreign actors.

- A stringent application process for government-funded grants and scholarships.



- Jared Brown of the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy recommended that Export Permits should be judicially allocated, particularly with dual-use and military-policy technologies.<sup>222</sup>

## Funding Canadian Innovation

We need to also ensure that Canadian academics and researchers have sufficient funding opportunities outside of foreign state actors and their affiliates. Funding Canadian innovation is not only an opportunity to safeguard Canadian research, but also an investment into Canada's future.

- Invest in Canadian research and innovation.
- Defund Alliance grant projects that are collaborating with known human rights abusers and/or national security risk actors.

## Investing into Resources and Infrastructures for Ethnic Communities in Canada

Strong communities will also strengthen our country. The CCP has demonstrated how their influence over Chinese-language and community organizations are deployed as lateral surveillance and control mechanisms. Support for Canada's ethnic communities will ensure Canadians are able to access resources and infrastructures, free from authoritarian regimes and foreign hostile actors' interference. The government can provide additional resources for ethnic communities, who are often the primary target for foreign influence and interference.

### **ACHK recommends the Government of Canada to consider:**

- Increase and dedicate government funded language, education, and media programs for non-English and non-French communities, as these should not be outsourced to foreign actors.
- Increase government funding for grassroots diasporic organizations.

## Protecting Canadian Data and User Information

In an increasingly cyber-reliant world, we cannot avoid all forms of data and user-information collection. Canada should take steps to mitigate the risks associated with technologies, whether

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<sup>222</sup> [An Examination of Intellectual Property Transfers to Third Party Entities at Publicly Funded Canadian Universities](#) (10 September, 2019). *University of Calgary*.



hardware or software, that are often exploited by the CCP (and other foreign actors) for surveillance and control of diasporic communities.

**ACHK recommends the Government of Canada to consider:**

- Placing restrictions on foreign actors from the collection, purchase, or export of data and user-information, including the academic, public, and private sectors.

## Conclusion

Beijing's approach to foreign influence is driven by the deep-seated and intensifying concern about regime survival. To ensure this, China has violated international norms and abused their power. The Chinese party-state apparatus has exploited and weaponized the freedoms guaranteed in liberal democracies to further its coercive and corrupted policy goals with asymmetric tactics. This has left Canada, Canadian citizens, and Canadian democracy in a vulnerable position.

The CCP's approach to influence is driven by deep-seated and intensifying concern about regime survival. From the outset of Xi's tenure, he declared an intent to forcefully restore the Party's control, prevent a Soviet-style collapse, and prepare for the next phase of "reform and opening up" and the CCP's rise to great power. These enduring imperatives will ensure a continued aggressive approach to securing leverage over developing countries, long after Xi stepping down.

There is no one policy that would single-handedly address foreign influence and interference operations. This will require systemic changes and a whole-of-government approach in how Canada engages with foreign authoritarian powers like China. To prevent the resulting spread of authoritarianism and defend its interests, liberal democracies like Canada will need to recommit to the hard work of defending democracy around the world.

# Appendix A - Sentiments from Chinese Community Forums

Taken from [原创：祖国饶了我们吧！我们华人只想安静地在加拿大生活](#)

[Translated: Original Post: China give us a break. We, the Chinese people, only want to live in Canada quietly.]

Archived screenshots: [page 1](#), [page 2](#), [page 3](#), [page 4](#)

Below are translations from several posts:

Post #1 (page 1) by TakeEasy

祖国饶了我们吧，我们真的不想再被你们的外围组织代表了，用来攻击加拿大政府和世界文明对抗了。

祖国饶了我们吧，求你们赶快把小粉红战狼接回国吧，不要再给我们华人挖坑了，台湾独立，香港国安法，真的跟我们一分钱关系都没有！

祖国饶了我们吧，求你们把世界吓尿好几次的华为研发中心和权贵孟晚舟也接回去吧，这些人真的跟我们一分钱关系都没有！

祖国饶了我们吧，你们强大和厉害我们都知道了，不要再大外宣了，这些强大除了给我们华人挖坑外，真的跟我们一分钱关系都没有，你们在国内宣传就好了。

Translation:

Would our motherland please have mercy on us, we really don't want to be represented by these peripheral organizations. We don't want to be used to attack the Canadian Government and the rest of civilization.

Would our motherland please have mercy on us, please take your warrior wolf little pinks back home. Please stop digging us Chinese people into a hole. Whether it's Taiwanese Independence or Hong Kong Security Law, these things really don't have anything to do with us!

Would our motherland please have mercy on us, please take your scary Huawei's Research Center and Meng Wanzhou back home as well, they really have nothing to do with us!

Would our motherland please have mercy on us, we get it, China is all powerful and great! Stop it with your worldwide expansion of Chinese propaganda. Other than digging us into a hole, it really has nothing to do with us. Go spread your propaganda back home in China.

Post #3 (page 1) by TakeEasy

今年被共产党代表了好几次

Translation:

I got represented by the CCP several times this year already.

Post #4 (page 1) by Banned Account

别做梦了，华夏韭菜，虽远必诛，华裔只有背锅的份，准备迎接椰奶们埋的雷吧

Translation:

Quit dreaming, "Even though a thousand miles away, the man who confronts China will pay." Us Chinese people will only be their scapegoat. Let's just get ready to take the blame for things.

Post #6 (page 1) by 支持香港抗争

海外华人逃脱不了被中共代表的命运，除非中共灭亡

Translation:

Unless CCP is no more, us overseas Chinese can't escape the destiny of being represented by the CCP.

Post #8 (page 1) by 败给没头脑

祖国饶了我们吧

Translation:

Would our motherland please have mercy on us.

Post #11 (Page 2) by newday

侨领们，求求你们别代表.....

谁TMD认识你们！

LOL

Translation:

Overseas Chinese leaders, please stop representing us. Who the \*\*\*\* even knows who you are! LOL

Post #15 (Page 2) by Calm

申纪兰同志代表你们人民，这有得商量吗？

你被代表了，不用操心了。

Translation:

You think you have a choice in this if Shen Jilan wants to represent you comrades?  
Don't worry, you are already being represented

Post #19 (Page 2) by 三文鱼

有针对华人的歧视时，怎么这些人不站出来，代表一下子来抗争呢？

Translation:

When Chinese people face discrimination, why don't these people stand up and help?

Post #21 (Page 3) by Take Easy  
(Quoting Post 19)

这些人可能在等中领馆的人或大陆来的高官接见，哪有闲功夫。

Translation:

These people are probably waiting for the Chinese Consulate or some higher ups from China. Who is gonna bother with this kind of thing.

Post #38 (Page 4) by 云舒

一看题目就是跪求，有毛用。

要挺直腰杆说，中国，离老子远点。每个华人，都采取不合作的态度，抵制这些各种会的活动，像春节团拜会之类的。大家都不要理他们，看他们怎么邀功请赏。

Translation:

What's the use of begging them? Stand your ground and say, "Buzz off, China." Every Chinese person should take an uncooperative approach and boycott their activities like their Spring Festival stuff. Let's see how they score brownie points with CCP if we just ignore them.

# Appendix B – Interviews

## Interview #1

### Topic

Security Risks of collaborations with Huawei; Infiltration of Chinese [state-owned] companies in Canadian academia

### Description of interview

We ask a current Canadian CS professor about an encounter where Huawei attempted to recruit him to a research project he deemed potentially unethical. He shares personal concerns that these situations are prevalent throughout Canadian academia.

### Interviewee information

**Name/alias of interviewee:** <redacted>

**Role/position/affiliation of interviewee:** Current professor in a top-5 ranked Canadian CS department

**Date of interview:** May 22, 2021

### Incident details

**Who are you, and how would you describe your academic status, and specialization?**

I am a faculty member in a computer science department ranked top-5 in Canada. I have worked closely with the IT industry and the National Defense in Canada for more than 10 years.

**Huawei offered to recruit you to a research project. Why, then, did you ultimately decline?**

There is one thing that really scared me away. As I am working in the area of AI (and AI by default always requires large volumes of input data), I asked where the company can get the data. The Director laughed and replied, “As long as you have a good idea, we can get any data for you. It is not a problem at all. We have much more relaxed requirements than other countries.” A few weeks later, I rejected their offer as I don’t feel comfortable working within these companies.

**How did Huawei respond to your decline? Did they follow-up, or contact you any further?**

After returning to my home institution in Canada, the Canadian Huawei branch contacted me, and offered to hire me as a consultant with three times my current salary. I can still work as a

professor. They are also willing to offer research grants to my university to buy off some of my time. As a consultant, all I need to do is to answer their emails. I rejected the offer.

**Do you imagine Huawei assumed you would accept? If so, why? Did you decline purely based on personal ethics concerns? Do you have additional insights or personal concerns about Huawei collaborations you'd like to share with us?**

As you can see, the above offer is actually very attractive because the research fund allows a professor to expand their research team, hire more students, and produce more research papers. This is how universities evaluate professors: money and papers. However, that's exactly what PRC party-controlled companies or government entities wish to achieve: they want us depending on them. After hiring some PhD students, a professor cannot just fire them next year, so the professor will rely on the companies to provide more funding. That's the moment the "state-component" of the companies can start asking for something, such as IP rights, transfer the know-how to them, sensitive information, etc. The above approach is a typical way if they want to quickly recruit a professor, but honestly this is quite expensive for them.

A more economical way to collaborate with a professor is to apply for an NSERC research grant. Suppose a CCP-controlled company provides \$0.5M to the professor's research team. By applying to that NSERC grant, the Canadian government will provide a \$0.5M matching fund. The professor will get \$1M for research. Some Canadian professors do participate in that kind of collaboration. As a security professor, I feel uncomfortable about this, but I don't know who I can talk to.

**Beyond this encounter, have you observed any behaviors you'd deem improper, unusual or untoward in any way?**

It's public knowledge that Huawei in China collaborates closely with PRC law enforcement, and PLA. It seems they can get whatever data they want from their systems, which probably includes Huawei Phones. Because of this, I am concerned Huawei Canada expresses strong interests in AI and cybersecurity, and actively partners with Canadian academic institutions.

Beyond Huawei, I have observed another Toronto company called Netbrain. The company internally communicates in Chinese only, even in Canada and US. I have heard management there refer to themselves as the "Red Guards" of the CEO.

**Was engaging with Huawei any different than other companies (e.g. Google)?**

I can feel most other US/Canadian companies truly wish to address technical challenges, because we talk about research problems first. Discussions about how to apply for grants and contracts come at the later stages.

In contrast, Huawei talks about benefits to professors even on first contact, not the research problems. It would seem like their goal is to recruit the target person, instead of producing technical research. This raises the question of why? Personally, I believe they want to use the money to buy the relationships. When it is the right time, they can leverage the relationship to get some information or technology, or simply ask the professors to say something against their belief. For example, ask them to brief the media to say Huawei 5G is secure.

## How would you respond to the PRC's accusations that ethics concerns are just bias targeting a 'Chinese crown jewel'?"

The accusations are based on similar patterns observed in the past. It is not difficult to see that Huawei's behavior follows the CCP United Front's 'dependence-trap' template.

CCP has historically weaponized dependence as a tool for infiltration. All infiltrations share a similar template, or fact-pattern with three steps: "feed, trap and kill".

- Feeding means providing benefits to attract the target.
- Trapping means making the target party, and PRC- dependent.
- Killing means making the target to perform or say something against their will or belief

As analogies, consider Confucius Institutes (CI) attached to universities and colleges, which start by providing a lot of financial benefits. The universities/colleges become dependent on the funding, and the institute converts ultimately into propaganda machines.

Now consider Huawei. They first offer a large amount of financial benefits upfront without even talking about actual research problems. They are clearly targeting the relationships. This is the feeding stage. When a research team becomes their dependent, they will start revealing their real intent. Can you see the same template being applied here?

### Key takeaways

What worthwhile policy changes should a current government make? What would you personally like to see?

Suggestion #1: I hope the government can come up with a list of foreign state-controlled companies (not necessarily China). Companies on the list are ineligible for receiving matching fund from tri-agency (NSERC/SSHRC/CIHR) as they are not real private companies. This will send a very clear signal to the academia that these are the companies to be avoided.

Suggestion #2: Educate the professors and research grant officers in universities. I hope my professor colleagues understand that foreign-state-controlled companies are different from a US/Canadian company. We need to explain to professors the consequences of collaborating with the state-controlled companies. First, the Chinese companies often expect to own the IP rights even though the hard work is often done by the Canadian students. Second, CCP-controlled companies often do not pay much attention to privacy protection. Collaborating with them will ruin their credibility and reputation.

I am thankful that recently Public Safety is initiating "Safeguarding Science" workshops. The workshops will provide some guidelines, but it is important to train the research grant officers in universities. In every university, there is a research office. All grant applications and research contracts have to be approved by the research office. If the government can provide a list of foreign-state companies as mentioned in Suggestion #1, then the grant officers can flag the potential risks in collaboration. The grant officers play a key role in the process. An administrative procedure can be implemented at that level.

## Interview #2

### Topic:

Political influence

### Description of interview:

An interview with a member of the NoBCforXi election campaign on foreign influence awareness from the provincial government.

### Interviewee information

**Name/alias of interviewee:** Jody Chan

**Role/position/affiliation of interviewee:**

- Volunteer organizer of the [NoBCforXi Campaign](#),
- Member of [Vancouverites Concerned About Hong Kong](#)

**Date of interview:** March 4, 2021

### Interview Summary:

#### What was the reason for the campaign?

With the BC Election, we realized that provincial candidates are not aware of foreign influence operations, especially from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). We started the campaign because we wanted candidates and their political parties to be aware of the threat that Xi Jinping brings. The CCP actively violates human rights at home and are aggressively expanding their influence in BC.

#### Can you describe the campaign?

The campaign urges the community to contact candidates and asked two questions (please see [email template on this page](#)):

1. Will you pledge to decline any gifts or donations from the Chinese Communist government and its affiliates or any other foreign governments that abuse human rights? This includes, but is not limited to, monetary donations, and paid-for trips?
2. Will you reject the CCP's 'Belt and Road' initiative and other economic development initiatives in BC that are promoted by authoritarian governments or enterprises with ties to authoritarian states? This is a national security threat identified by CSIS?

These two questions served a dual purpose: educating provincial politicians and candidates about the CCP's influence, while providing reassurance to our communities that their politicians aren't in the CCP's pocketbooks. Our communities need to feel safe, knowing that their elected officials are not under the influence of their oppressors.



All BC provincial election candidates from major parties were contacted with the pledge questions throughout the campaign. Once we received the responses, we captured it and pulled the responses together in a spreadsheet that was made public.

Candidates were given a label of being CCP leaning or against CCP influence. The analysis was generated based on the evidence submitted from the candidate's previous track record (which is recorded in the spreadsheet) and the candidate's responses to the pledges (which is also documented in the spreadsheet). These were the six label categories: Against CCP Interference; Against CCP Interference (Likely); CCP Leaning (Likely); CCP Leaning; Awaiting Response; Declined to Respond.

### What are your findings?

- Many candidates tried to dodge the question at first, until the community demanded an answer or the campaign would list them as not pledging (no response)
- While conversing with the candidates, some genuinely did not know of the Belt and Road Initiative, or did not realize it was a national security threat as identified by CSIS. Some were unaware that the CCP was trying to influence Canadian politics and a few didn't even know of the gross human rights violations committed by the CCP
- Of the 235 candidates from the three major BC provincial parties (BC NDP, BC Liberal Party, BC Greens), 197 declined to respond. There were 11 candidates that were identified as CCP leaning or CCP Leaning (Likely). There were 27 candidates that were identified as against CCP interference or against CCP interference - Likely).
- Some of the evidence submitted was alarming because we found that BC had signed a MOU for the Belt and Road Initiative and some of the candidates had spoken at United Front hosted events. Some candidates were seen shaking hands with key figures who were seen at counter protests that harassed pro-democracy Hong Kong-Canadians.
- Some community members were scared to even contact candidates as they did not know if their candidate was CCP leaning and they could inadvertently be identified as a pro-democracy Hong Konger to Chinese authorities.
- During the election [a reporter asked Premier John Horgan about the NoBCforXi](#) campaign, and this was his answer: "As a party and a government, we believe strongly in safeguarding human rights. However, foreign policy relations are the responsibility of the federal government, not the provincial government," said the NDP, providing no indication it may take any such concerns to Ottawa. Premier John Horgan has previously declined Glacier Media's request to address why his government continues to support a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was signed in 2016 by the BC Liberals with Guangdong province and remains on the books under his party's governance. The controversial agreement is intended to foster increased economic, social and cultural ties between the countries.

### Key takeaways:

The findings were alarming to many in the community because the provincial government has jurisdiction over trade agreements and other policy decisions that fall outside of federal oversight where there is slightly better understanding of foreign affairs and national security concerns. And the fact that a lot of candidates are declining to comment or thinking that foreign relations are the sole responsibility of the federal government is disturbing.

There is clearly a gap in understanding among provincial politicians about the threats of foreign interference and influence operations in Canadian society.

The fact that a campaign was needed to ask politicians to pledge they won't be influenced by some foreign entity is absurd. More concerning is the high number of declined responses. The questions were simple in nature, one asking to not be influenced by foreign donations and gifts and one to reject the CCP's Belt and Road initiative, which was [identified as a threat by CSIS](#). The fact that many declined to respond to such a clear cut ask is unsettling.

## Appendix C - Recommended Readings

- [A Preliminary Study of PRC Political Influence and Interference Activities in American Higher Education](#), published by the Wilson Center
- [China: Freedom in the World 2021](#), published by the Freedom House
- [China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order](#), published by Reporters without Borders.
- [China Unbound: A New World Disorder](#), by Joanna Chiu
- [Deafening Whispers](#), published by Doublethink Lab
- [Hacking for Cash](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [Huawei & 5G: Clarifying the Canadian Equities and Charting a Strategic Path Forward](#), published by Citizen Lab
- [Hunting the Phoenix](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [Picking Flowers, Making Honey](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [Special Report 2020: Beijing's Global Megaphone](#), published by Freedom House
- [The China Defence Universities Tracker](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [The Influence Environment](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [The Party Speaks for You](#), published by Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- [TikTok vs Douyin](#), published by Citizen Lab
- [We Chat, They Watch](#), published by Citizen Lab
- [Wilful Blindness: How A Network Of Narcos, Tycoons And CCP Agents Infiltrated The West](#), by Sam Cooper