

## Country Summaries

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*This is a summary of some intelligence information that is available to the Government of Canada's national security and intelligence community on a certain topic, presented such that it can be released to the public without disclosing information that would cause injury to national security and international relations. As such it has several important limitations. **The summary must be read in light of these limitations, otherwise the summary has the potential to mislead the reader.** The limitations are the following:*

- Summary may be incomplete:** *The summary summarizes some, but not necessarily all, the intelligence information on this topic that is available to the Government of Canada's national security and intelligence community. For example, it only contains relevant information that can be appropriately sanitized for public release.*
- Summary does not indicate time of collection:** *This summary does not indicate, unless expressly stated, when the summarized information was collected or obtained. This information was collected and analyzed over a period of time, which may/may not have been available to decision makers across the Government of Canada during the writ-period. As such, for example, it should not be assumed that the information was collected close in time to the events being described.*
- Summary may contain information that is single-sourced:** *The summary does not indicate whether the information it relates comes from a single source, or from multiple sources.*
- Summary may contain information of unknown and varying degrees of reliability or information that may have been provided to influence as much as inform.**
- Summary does not indicate the source of information:** *The summary may present information from different types of sources without identifying the type of source (i.e. open source, human sources, technical intercepts, etc.). Nor, does it indicate whether it was translated from another language than the language in which it is presented.*
- Summary does not indicate corroboration or lack of corroboration:** *The summary does not indicate whether other information exists that may corroborate the summarized information, or, alternatively, whether there is no such corroborating information.*
- Summary does not analyze information:** *This document is a summary of intelligence; it is not an analysis of the overall import, meaning, or strength of intelligence.*

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

The countries covered in this summary include the People's Republic of China, Russia, India, Iran and Pakistan only. It does not cover the full range of countries engaged in foreign interference (FI) activities in Canada.

It has as its focus activities related to FI at the national and electoral district levels between 2018 and present, per the Commission's Stage 2 mandate. It does not address the full range of FI activities observed in Canada.

## People's Republic of China

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

### WHAT

While all states pursue legitimate diplomatic activities to influence other countries, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is engaged in a number of activities in Canada that go beyond normal diplomatic activity, and as such, constitute FI. Relevant to the Commission's Stage 2 mandate for the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, the PRC was engaged in FI activities at the national and electoral district levels between 2018 and present. The resources that the PRC expends on these activities exceed those of other states.

Governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the PRC uses a range of tools and actors (including Canada-based proxy agents<sup>1</sup>) to engage in FI activities in Canada. PRC FI activities are wide-ranging and include: the monitoring and transnational repression<sup>2</sup> of diaspora communities; activities meant to impact the outcomes of Canadian democratic processes; and clandestinely or deceptively shaping narratives in support of PRC strategic objectives and/or counter policies that they believe threaten PRC interests.

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

### WHY

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

The UFWD is a department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that is tasked with collecting intelligence and engaging in foreign interference. Internationally, the UFWD attempts to control and influence the PRC diaspora living in other countries, shape international opinions, and influence politicians to support the Chinese government's policies. It has a budget in the billions for its global operations. The state Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (which was absorbed by the UFWD in 2018), as well as the Ministry of State Security (MSS), and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), are also involved in FI. The MSS and the MPS operate covertly internationally and remotely from the PRC.

Belonging to an organization with links to the PRC, such as those affiliated with the CCP's United Front system, does not amount in and of itself to FI or pose a threat to Canada's national security. However, the PRC uses a whole of society approach that blurs the distinction between legitimate activity (influence) and clandestine, deceptive and/or coercive activity (interference). The PRC uses the United

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

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

Front system to engage in clandestine, deceptive, and threatening activity around the world, often by leveraging influence and exerting control over some diaspora communities.

## **WHO**

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

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

The PRC targets individuals it perceives as having status or influence in a particular community or within broader Canadian society, including community and business leaders, academics, members of the media (online and traditional), and current and former elected officials at all levels of government. In the case of current and former elected officials, the PRC may target individuals through actions which actively support the elected official’s candidacy, policies, and/or activities, or the PRC may take actions to the detriment of an elected official, which could include through providing support to a political opponent.

## **HOW**

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

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

Using its influence on Chinese language media and social media platforms, the PRC promotes pro-PRC narratives, spreads disinformation<sup>3</sup>, and guides public discourse on PRC-related issues, while minimizing or suppressing and at times censoring content it deems 'anti-China' within Canada.

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

## Russia

### **WHAT**

Russia poses a substantial threat to Canada and its allies. While we have not detected significant foreign interference targeting Canada's past federal elections and democratic institutions, this does not rule out future actions. Russia possesses both the capability and capacity to intensify its disinformation<sup>4</sup> and interference campaigns against Canada, particularly through social media and other online platforms. Given Russia's track record of such activities elsewhere, vigilance is warranted.

### **WHY**

Russia employs disinformation campaigns as a cornerstone of its global foreign interference strategy, concentrating on areas of strategic importance. These operations primarily focus on neighboring countries, former Soviet Bloc states, Five Eyes alliance members, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. Russia's overarching objectives in conducting these campaigns against Western nations are threefold: first, to erode support for US-led institutions, partnerships, and alliances; second, to shape public opinion, exploit existing social issues, and widen societal divisions; and third, to undermine public confidence in Western political systems and democratic processes.

### **WHO**

Russian state-linked actors persist in their attempts at foreign interference and disinformation operations against some Western countries. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine continues to be a focal point for Russian disinformation efforts, which are expected to endure.

Russia orchestrates its messaging campaigns through a well-established network of Western media influencers. This network comprises pro-Kremlin activists and opportunistic allies who amplify pro-Russian narratives across a wide spectrum of issues via various online platforms. By leveraging these intermediaries, Russia aims to lend credibility to its messaging and extend its reach into Western audiences, effectively blurring the lines between genuine public discourse and state-sponsored propaganda.

### **HOW**

Russia pursues various tactics, according to its strategic requirements related to targeted countries or regions. Russia employs the use of hybrid warfare tactics against NATO members such as sabotage of critical infrastructure, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and attempts to undermine democratic processes.

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*Recent open-source examples:*

- a) **'Doppelganger' is a sophisticated Russian disinformation campaign aimed at damaging Western democracies.** By cloning reputable news outlets and government websites, it disseminates pro-Russian propaganda, undermines trust in institutions, and sows discord among Ukraine's supporters. The campaign leverages social media to amplify its message, using tactics like fake accounts and paid advertising. To evade detection, Doppelganger employs advanced techniques like geofencing and domain redirection. This persistent and evolving threat requires a coordinated response to protect democratic values and counter its influence.
- b) The European Parliament recently adopted a resolution expressing grave concern about Russian interference in European democratic processes. The resolution alleges Russia is recruiting Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as "influence agents" and funding certain European political parties. It highlights concerns about MEPs' alleged involvement with the Russian FSB and cites instances of Russian funding across EU member states, including Germany, France, and Slovakia. The resolution calls for investigations into MEPs allegedly associated with the Kremlin and underscores the need for vigilance and unity against ongoing disinformation and interference efforts.

Canada does not currently have the same profile for Russia as some of our allies as a target for disinformation and other Russian FI related activities; given an ever-changing geo-political landscape, it is important that Canada remain vigilant regarding the potential for future escalation against Canada's democratic processes.

## India

### WHAT

Government of India (GoI) officials, including their Canada-based proxy agents<sup>5</sup>, engage in a range of activities, that seek to influence Canadian communities and politicians. Where these activities include deceptive, clandestine or threatening activities, they are deemed to be foreign interference. These activities attempt to align Canada's positions with India's interests on key issues, particularly with respect to how the GoI perceives Canada-based supporters of an independent Sikh homeland that they refer to as Khalistan. This includes GoI FI activities at the national and electoral district levels between 2018 and present.

### WHY

India takes a significant interest in Canada because of the large South Asian communities. The GoI views parts of Indo-Canadian-communities as fostering 'anti-India' sentiment, and thus as a threat to stability and national security in India. The GoI does not differentiate between lawful pro-Khalistan political advocacy and the relatively small number of Canada-based Khalistani violent extremism. It perceives anyone engaged in Khalistani separatism as a seditious threat to India's domestic stability.

Mainly in response to this issue, the GoI engages in FI activities against Canadians who hold prominent positions in society including elected officials. These activities undertaken by the GoI have included clandestine, deceptive and coercive activity that seeks to achieve the strategic objectives of the GoI.

The GoI attempts to align Canadian politicians and decision-makers—including through public statements, policy positions and responses to Parliamentary votes and motions—with pro-GoI positions and policies. Additionally, the GoI attempts to shape the final make up of Parliament through supporting individual pro-GoI candidates, including through interference in leadership and nomination contests. .

### WHO

A body of intelligence indicates that GoI proxy agents may have attempted to interfere in democratic processes, reportedly including through the clandestine provision of illicit financial support to various Canadian politicians as a means of attempting to secure the election of pro-GoI candidates or gaining influence over candidates who take office. In some instances, the candidates may never know their campaigns received illicit funds. The GoI has also attempted to interfere in Canada's democratic processes by creating and spreading false narratives regarding certain elected officials.

Further, targets of Indian FI are often members of the Indo-Canadian communities, which may impact community members' willingness to engage in democratic processes. Prominent non-Indo-Canadians are also subject to the GoI's FI activities.

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<sup>5</sup> Proxy: For the purpose of this summary, a proxy is a specific individual who takes explicit and/or implicit direction from a foreign state while obfuscating the link between influence activities and a foreign state. Proxy agents are witting participants in furthering the objective of the foreign state in specific circumstances. A proxy is a Canada-based individual (Canadian citizen, Canadian Permanent Resident, etc.) who may/may not belong to a specific diaspora community.



**HOW**

Indian officials in Canada have increasingly relied on Canadian and Canada-based proxies and the contacts in their networks to conduct FI-related activities. This tactic obfuscates any explicit link between the GoI and its FI activities. Proxies liaise and work with Indian intelligence officials in India and Canada, taking both explicit and implicit direction from them.

## Iran

### **WHAT**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is not currently, nor has it been historically, a significant FI threat actor in Canada at the national and electoral district levels.

However, intelligence reporting indicates that officials from Iran are likely monitoring, influencing, and collecting information on Canadians of Iranian origin in Canada as part of its efforts to prevent criticism of the regime.

In some cases, Iran seeks to silence Canada-based critics through harassment and intimidation. For example, Canada-based families of several victims of the downing of flight PS752 have reported threats and intimidation following their criticism of the regime's handling of the incident.

## Pakistan

### WHAT

The Government of Pakistan (GoP) has conducted FI against Canada primarily to promote political, security and economic stability in Pakistan and to counter India's growing global influence. The GoP was a limited FI actor in Canada at the national and electoral district levels between 2018 and present, except what was detailed in CAN.SUM.000011, titled *Threat Reduction Measure Conducted in 2019*.

### WHY

Canada is a FI target due to its significant South Asian community and presence of Canada-based groups and Canada-based individuals who can be leveraged as proxy agents<sup>6</sup> against India.

GoP FI activities abroad are influenced by its turbulent domestic political, economic and security situation, as well as its longstanding tensions with neighbouring India.

### WHO

Various facets of Canadian society may be targeted by GoP FI actors, including all levels of government and electoral processes (e.g. federal, provincial, municipal), specific Canadian communities, as well as Canadian media entities.

### HOW

GoP FI actors have previously engaged in interference activities in different levels of Canadian elections (provincial/federal) by, for example, attempting to clandestinely affect the selection of and increase support for politicians and candidates who are perceived to be more pro-Pakistan or anti-India. CSIS has undertaken a Threat Reduction Measure in order to reduce the GoP's FI activities related to Canada's democratic processes.

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