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Ministerial Briefing: Foreign Interference

- **What is and isn't foreign interference**
 - Foreign influenced activities are those within or relating to Canada that are detrimental to the interests of Canada and are clandestine or deceptive or involve a threat to any person.
 - Foreign interference activities include efforts to clandestinely control, support, or influence, stifle discussion through threats, intimidate Canadian communities, and pressure and corrupt policymakers.
 - Foreign interference does NOT include lobbying and advocacy, overt engagement with Canadians through media or otherwise, or Canadians openly advocating foreign interests.
 - Foreign states engage in FI activities against Canadians and Canadian institutions in order to advance their strategic interests to the detriment of Canada's national interests and security.
 - These threats are complex and modern, evolving and increasing, and target every level of government. They pose a significant threat to the integrity of our political system and democratic institutions, social cohesion, economy and long-term prosperity, and fundamental rights and freedoms.
- **Who conducts foreign interference against Canada?**
 - **China** is – by far – the most active state due to the scope of its FI activities and the level of resources it expends.
 - PRC activities are sophisticated, pervasive, persistent, and directed against all levels of government and civil society across the country.
 - The PRC leverages a vast range of tools in Canada, including the United Front Work Department, its diplomatic corps, and non-government assets such as community groups and trusted contacts.
 - PRC activity against Canada should be viewed on a spectrum, ranging from political and diplomatic influence, through to clear patterns of foreign interference, to formal punishment and sanctions against Canadian officials.
 - Although China may be the most active, it is by no means the only foreign country engaging in FI activities in Canada.
 - These states may leverage a narrower range of tools and resources than China, but their activities are nonetheless detrimental to Canada's interests.

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- **India** engages in FI activities for two main reasons: to influence Canadians politicians toward a pro Government of India stance, and to counter threats to its stability.
 - Indian officials [redacted] [redacted] use Canadian citizens as proxies to conduct FI activities, including against our democratic institutions.
 - At the moment, **Russia** does not see Canada as a priority for FI activities as it does not perceive us to be an existential threat.
 - [redacted]
 - **Iran** has directed a coordinated intimidation campaign against Canada-based families of PS752 victims.
 - [redacted]
 - [redacted]
- **What are the impacts?**
 - **PRC** activity works in a grey zone of non-transparency and overt activities, and has evolved by openly and publicly challenging Canadian political parties platforms through diplomatic rhetoric and propaganda.
 - China directs its FI activities at members of groups involved with what it calls the 'Five Poisons' – Falun Gong, Taiwan, Tibet, Uyghur, and pro-democracy movements (such as in Hong Kong) – that represent perceived challenges to the Communist Party's stability and legitimacy.
 - The PRC attempts to intimidate and silence members of these communities by threatening family members residing in the PRC, or denying visas to those wishing to travel back to visit.
 - China has also interfered in our democratic institutions, including in the most recent election.
 - China obfuscates their involvement in influence and interference efforts, such as in state-owned and Canadian media outlets.

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- China also targets academia by [REDACTED]
- During the last general election, [REDACTED] **India** was involved in a clandestine FI campaign to use political candidates and sway them toward a pro-India agenda.
 - [REDACTED]
- Indian officials have also conducted FI against politicians in Canada outside of electoral campaigns, [REDACTED]
- **Russia's** [REDACTED] observed little FI activities by Russia against Canada, even though Russia has the capability to engage in such activities if desired.
- Previously, Russian FI activities have targeted Canadian interests when these are perceived to conflict with Russian interests, such as Government of Canada policies relating to Ukraine or the Arctic.
- The relatives of the victims of PS752 have been subject to **Iranian** intimidation, threats, and monitoring [REDACTED]. The goal of this campaign is to minimize criticism of the Iranian regime and undermine demands for an investigation.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- **What is the way forward?**
 - To build resilience, Canadians, communities and all levels of government need to be aware of FI threat activities.
 - A concerted, whole-of-government strategy to counter FI is also needed. CSIS can investigate and advise on FI threats, but the responsibility to counter FI activities must be shared across government.

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- Aligning a strategy on hostile activities by state actors (HASA) with ongoing economic security initiatives and potential China and Indo-Pacific strategies will be critical to ensure cohesion of purpose and action.
 - Ongoing GoC policy work in this area is exploring several initiatives, including: Public-facing and classified strategies on countering HASA, improved governance and coordination mechanisms, introducing a Canadian Foreign Influence Registry, legislative amendments to the *Security of Information Act* and the *Criminal Code*, and modernizing CSIS' authorities.
- In addition, raising awareness of FI threats to democratic institutions and processes with Parliamentarians – across all levels of government - is critical to countering FI.
- Our Five Eyes partners have made strides in recent years to equip themselves with stronger tools to mitigate FI (diplomatic expulsions, foreign registry, criminalize of FI). Canada must do the same.
- CSIS is a key member of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force. There was FI in the last election but none that was deemed significant enough to have altered the outcome of the election overall and requiring the Critical Election Public Protocol Panel to notify Canadians.
- I would be pleased to brief you in more detail on CSIS' role in SITE and on FI in elections at a later date.

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