

Panel Discussion:

Election Security Grey Areas



Lake Laberge, Yukon Territory, Canada. Shutterstock

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Context and Objective

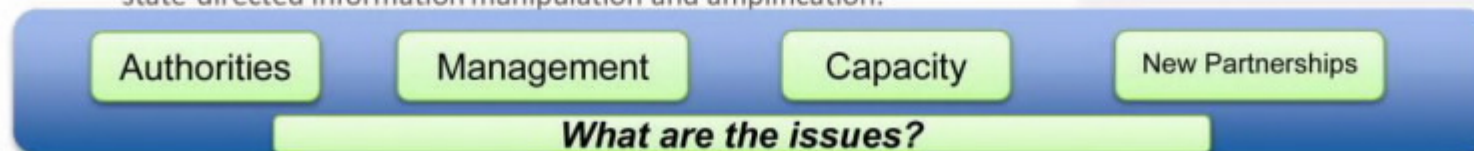
- The Cabinet Directive mandates the Panel to assess foreign and domestic interference and their impact on a free and fair election.
- The election environment was characterized by election security “grey areas” which generated discussions on their relevance to the Panel and security agency capabilities.
- Seek Panel concurrence of grey space issues, to enable future work to close these gaps.

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Foreign Interference


- Monitoring of GE 2021 demonstrates the threat of foreign interference is persistent and complex:
 - Investigated potential issues and took operational actions when appropriate;
 - Increased media/political attention raised spectre of possible Chinese interference; and
 - Increased diversity of online ecosystem expanded the threat surface.
- S&I community experience and Panel discussion highlighted the following considerations:
 - Challenges in distinguishing appropriate and illegitimate activities complicates risk analysis inside *and* outside election cycles (particularly related to overt state-linked messaging designed to influence diaspora communities);
 - Are new tools like a 'foreign agent registry' worth consideration?;
 - Need strengthened capability for attribution on all platforms and origins (i.e. can we better understand what is happening on WeChat?); and
 - Need to strengthen our understanding of activity in the social media space to enable better judgements on state-directed information manipulation and amplification.



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Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism

- GE 2021 witnessed a noted surge in violent discourse, threatening behaviour, and anti-government messages.
 - Many narratives shared similarities with Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremists (IMVE) which raised concerns about escalation and acts of violence
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- Threat monitoring and Panel discussion raised the following considerations going forward:
 - Definitional: Need clear delineation and guidance to help differentiate democratic expression, ideologically motivated criminality (IMC), and IMVE wherever possible;
 - Management: Require clearly defined lanes and intersection points for managing election security, campaign threats, IMC, and IMVE; and
 - Tools: Can agencies effectively monitor threats within current authorities?

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Physical Security (Protective Policing)

- Aggressive discourse and threats to participants in the democratic process became increasingly normalized and escalated during GE 2021:

- Direct and indirect threats to candidates;
- Acts of violence directed towards;
- Security incidents involving election



- These conditions and Panel discussions raised the following considerations going forward:
 - Foresight: Are threatening conditions transient *or* a new normal?;
 - Programming: Are Ministerial Security, RCMP Protective Policing and local police capabilities adequate for the level and persistence of threats?;
 - Planning: Should future Panels include these broader issues *by default?*; and
 - Outreach: Strong partnership required between political parties and GoC to coordinate campaign and security operations.

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Discussion Questions

- Does the deck capture the “grey areas” sufficiently and are there points of particular importance?
- Should proactive communications be considered for issues that fall below the threshold?
- Are there any issues you suggest should receive immediate attention by security agencies?
- What type of governance is required to see this work through?
- Are there areas where the S&I Community should begin considering a process to generate new authorities (and potentially resources)?

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Slide Notes

Slide 3:
Foreign-based platforms like WeChat amplified Challenges