

# THE FIVE EYES AND CANADA'S "CHINA PANIC"

A THREAT TO DIPLOMACY, RESEARCH, AND PEACE IN THE PACIFIC?

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A DISCUSSION PAPER



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# Abstract

This discussion paper reveals how CSIS and the Five Eyes manufactured a “China Threat” in 2018 that turned into a firestorm with the arrest of Meng Wanzhou at YVR that December. Fanned by anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, then stoked by CSIS leaks and a hostile media sensationalizing accusations of ‘foreign interference’, the China threat has mutated to become Canada’s “China Panic” with far reaching implications. This paper examines the three stages in the making of this panic, and how a toxic mixture of Sinophobia and anti-communism has meant that the federal NDP, Conservatives and Bloc Québécois are preventing any resolution of the crisis. Now, as other countries stabilize relations with the People’s Republic of China, Canada is stuck – a diplomatic outlier unable to get its house in order. Meanwhile, CSIS is in the process of installing an unprecedented research surveillance system in Canadian universities, and Canadian Armed Forces are regularly skirmishing with PRC forces in East Asia. The situation has become critical, necessitating some difficult conversations to determine a path forward towards justice and peace.

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**CSIS efforts with the “principals of the largest Canadian research universities,” have been so successful that it has come “to the point now it is them asking us, you know, how can we work together?”**

*– CSIS director David Vigneault, at the Hoover Institution, October 2023*

# THE FIVE EYES AND CANADA'S "CHINA PANIC": A THREAT TO DIPLOMACY, RESEARCH, AND PEACE IN THE PACIFIC?

## Executive Summary

This report reveals how US intelligence agencies and CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) manufactured an inflated "China Threat" in 2018 that mutated over the next five years to become Canada's "China Panic" with far reaching implications.

Providing the first detailed and fully referenced account of the creation and rise of the China Panic, the report dissects the recent past to reveal how the heads of the CIA, FBI, and other US intelligence agencies, appointed by Donald Trump, launched what the *Wall Street Journal* called an unprecedented campaign in early 2018 to portray China and the telecom giant Huawei as a major threat to the Five Eyes, composed of the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

Attending Five Eyes' meetings in London (UK) and in Halifax was CSIS director David Vigneault who uncritically accepted the US accusations, rushing to share them with Justin Trudeau in the spring and summer of 2018. Fully informed of US accusations, the Canadian government willingly accepted the US request to extradite Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. The firestorm that erupted with the subsequent arrests of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig plunged Canada-China relations into a crisis from which they have yet to recover.

Exacerbated by anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, then amplified by constant CSIS leaks and media accusations of 'foreign interference', the China threat has become Canada's 'China Panic', a classic example of threat inflation with far-reaching effects on diplomacy, university research, and defence policy. The findings highlight the need for a sober reassessment of Canada-China relations, particularly in light of revelations regarding the involvement of India in the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, exposés of Canada's own spy operations in Asia, and recent US and Australian initiatives to stabilize relations with China.

### The report is presented in three parts:

**Part 1** acknowledges that criticism of China in itself is not racist, and that the People's Republic of China has plenty of problems that can be and are used to foment dissension. It tracks how such issues have been amplified and distorted leading to an unrelenting crisis in Canada-China relations. As a result, Canada has become a diplomatic lame duck, unable to extract itself from the 'China Panic' while the US and Australia actively seek a rapprochement with China in an effort to stabilize relations. Highlighting the stages in the making of the China Panic over the past five years, it tracks the interactions of three distinct narratives – China as a techno-threat; China as a viral threat; and China as interferer. It then follows the paper trail back to 2018, when CSIS first imported the narrative from the Trump administration. The report suggests the intensity of the crisis in Canada is related to the position staked out by the federal NDP as a 'cold warrior' regarding China. This has led to an NDP/Conservative/Bloc Québécois alliance that has institutionalized the 'China threat' discourse and stymied any initiative to mitigate the crisis. It concludes by illustrating the complicated relationship between Sinophobia and anti-communism that is used to create a divisive narrative about 'good Chinese' and 'bad Chinese'.

**Part 2** focuses on the close collaboration that has arisen between Canada's preeminent research universities (U15) and CSIS. The report explores how David Vigneault first approached the U15 as far back as 2018 with CIA/FBI claims that China was using "human enabled espionage" to steal research secrets developed in Canadian universities. The report points to the failure on the part of the U15 to subject CSIS claims to any form of scientific scrutiny with the result being the adoption of new research guidelines that have led to racial profiling in universities. The study explores the dynamics of, and resistance to, racial profiling in both the US and Canada. The government is now preparing to introduce vastly expanded research restrictions that

will mark the rise of a research surveillance system unprecedented in Canadian history. CSIS director David Vigneault claims that CSIS efforts with the “principals of the largest Canadian research universities,” have been so successful that it has come “to the point now it is them asking us, you know, how can we work together?” It outlines possible actions that might counteract the emerging surveillance systems threatening international research collaboration and academic freedom.

**Part 3** focuses on recent deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to actively patrol around the Korean peninsula and in the South China Sea. The result has been regular skirmishes with PRC forces in the region. Examining the origins of these deployments arising from

the Vancouver Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in early 2018, the paper tracks the escalation over the next five years and the resistance it engenders on the part of Indigenous peoples in the Pacific as well as from the PRC. Probing how CAF deployments enable the US military to justify its longstanding military domination of the area, the report suggests that recent CAF military deployments constitute an important shift in Canadian foreign policy that has taken place without any serious public consultation. Does this shift towards forward engagements with the US military in the Pacific signal the end to the search for an autonomous Canadian foreign policy? Increasing polarization will demand difficult conversations and critical decisions to avoid the calamities of war and environmental degradation that imperil the planet.

## PART 1

# The Making of Canada’s “China Panic” and Diplomatic Fallout

*“D’autres pays occidentaux entretiennent des relations difficiles avec la Chine, la Russie ou d’autres puissances, mais aucun ne se retrouve dans la même posture que le Canada.”* [Other western countries face difficulties in their relations with China, Russia, or other powers, but none finds themselves in the same situation as Canada].<sup>1</sup>

– Jocelyn Coulon, former advisor to the minister of foreign affairs (2016-2017) [in](#) *Le Devoir*

### Introduction

In the summer of 2023, the People’s Republic of China (hereafter PRC, or China) expanded the resumption of group tours to 78 countries. Canada was not among the countries included in this new authorization – a serious [blow](#), given that Chinese tourists coming to Canada contributed over a billion dollars per year to the travel industry prior to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> Yet the main protagonist with China today – the United States – as well as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan all received approval for group tours from China, despite having had rocky relations with China. Why have these countries gained approval for group travel, but Canada has not?

To further illustrate how far Canada has diverged, even from its allies, consider that over the past six months, the United States has sent five cabinet-level delegations to China and supported the creation of two new US-China economic committees. Australian prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has visited China amid [reports](#) suggesting the Australian government will allow China’s purchase of the Port of Darwin to stand, and has withdrawn complaints to the WTO against Chinese tariffs on Australian wine. Xi Jinping and US president Biden met at the APEC summit in November with [reported](#) agreements to open a presidential hotline, to resume military-to-military communications and to curb fentanyl production.

And Canada? Not a single delegation since 2019. The sole minister to go to China was the minister of the environment, Steven Guilbeault, who went to China in the summer of 2023, not to discuss Canada-China relations, but rather to attend a pre-planned meeting of the China

Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED), along with representatives of the United Nations.

Whereas the US and Australia are making substantial efforts with China to stabilize relations, despite ongoing tensions, Canada has been unable or unwilling to do so and is now out in the cold, on its own, as pointed out by Jocelyn Coulon above. Global Affairs Canada can only sit and observe as other actors determine the fate of Canada-China relations. This inability to find a path forward distinguishes Canada from its allies.

In this paper, we examine the crisis as it has developed over the past five years and suggest that: 1) factors specific to Canada amplified the “China threat” into a perfect storm, inciting what might be called Canada’s “China Panic”<sup>3</sup>; 2) the crisis has deepened with no end in sight because the federal New Democratic Party (NDP), the minority Liberal government’s main ally, is stoking and perpetuating the “China Panic”, and 3) underlying the narratives that are driving the “China Panic” is a complex intersection of Sinophobia (overt or systemic forms of racism based on fear or hatred directed at China or at peoples of Chinese heritage) and anti-communism (exaggeration, stigmatization, or demonization of an entity as communist that erases the complexity and contributions of radical political formations, and invites state repression).

The onset of the crisis in Canada-China relations dates to 2018.<sup>4</sup> Prior to this, relations had been relatively cordial. In 2016, Justin Trudeau traveled to China, then pre-

<sup>1</sup> Jocelyn Coulon, “Le Canada peut-il encore se faire une place sur la scène internationale?” October 13, 2023, *Le Devoir*. John Price translation.

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of Canada-China economic relations see Yanling Wong, “China’s Economic Rise and Its Implications for Canada,” (China Strategy Project, Institute for Peace & Diplomacy, 2022), 1-6. Recent trends show trades in goods continuing to increase, while trade in services and foreign investment from China is rapidly declining.

<sup>3</sup> This term derives from David Brophy’s book: *China Panic: Australia’s Alternative to Paranoia and Pandering* (La Trobe University Press, 2021). Appreciation to Listen Chen for making this connection.

<sup>4</sup> This generally accords with the views of B. Michael Frolic in his new book, *Canada and China: A Fifty Year Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 376-384.

mier Li Keqiang visited Canada, and the two countries began discussions on a potential free trade agreement (FTA). These discussions continued into 2017. Canadian warships were warmly greeted while visiting Shanghai in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Canada's new defence policy, announced in June 2017, called for strengthening ties with China, as did Chrystia Freeland in her speech on foreign policy priorities, just prior to the defence policy being announced.<sup>6</sup> In 2017, 48 percent of Canadians viewed China favourably compared to only 12 percent in 2023 according to Angus Reid [polling](#).

So, what happened?

## The Making of Canada's "China Panic"

Criticism of China is not in itself racist, and a number of PRC actions have provided grist for the narrative mills stoking the "China threat" in this period.<sup>7</sup> Ongoing repression against the Uyghur peoples in western China (Xinjiang), the imposition of new security laws in Hong Kong and the arrest of many activists, and assertive sovereignty claims in ongoing territorial disputes in East Asia have been among the most reported. Furthermore, the existence of a massive surveillance apparatus in the PRC, confirmed by Edward Snowden in his 2013 revelations, has been cause for concern.<sup>8</sup>

Any inappropriate activities on the part of the Chinese or other governments in Canada need to be dealt with appropriately, and measures to deal with such transgressions already exist. But whatever threat China may present has been blown out of proportion. US foreign policy specialist Stephen Walt describes this type of threat inflation: "A time honored method for selling an ambitious foreign policy is to exaggerate foreign dangers."<sup>9</sup> Gordon Laxer, professor emeritus of the University of Alberta, recently [described](#) how this threat inflation distorts matters in Canada: "China's ability to sway a broad spectrum of

Canadian voters is far weaker than the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producer's (CAPP) foreign-funded political interference." In that sense, PRC problems in themselves provide little explanatory power for the continuing crisis in Canada-China relations that has seen the "China threat" escalate to unheard of levels. Other countries, including liberal entities such as the United States, have committed extensive crimes against humanity and peace without being portrayed as an existential threat to Canada.<sup>10</sup>

To understand the nature of the "China Panic" requires a close reading of the specific events, narratives, and dynamics as they have evolved in Canada, with attention to the role of Canada's main spy agency, CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service). For the purposes of analysis, we categorize three specific types of discourse/actions that occurred in successive, overlapping waves of hostility directed at the PRC.

## China as Techno-Threat

On December 1, 2018, Canadian authorities detained and arrested Meng Wanzhou while she was transferring to a flight to Mexico at YVR, Vancouver international airport. The arrest was legally justified by an extradition request from the United States. The arrest of Meng, a top executive of the Chinese telecom giant Huawei (and the daughter of its founder), was serious. At the time, Donald Trump told his national security advisor, John Bolton, that they had just arrested "the Ivanka Trump of China." Bolton recounted that he wanted to reply "I never knew Ivanka was a spy and fraudster" but restrained himself, asserting instead that "Huawei wasn't a company but an arm of China's intelligence services."<sup>11</sup>

China retaliated, arresting Canadian's Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig a few weeks later, plunging Canada-China relations into a crisis from which they have yet

<sup>5</sup> Canada, "Exploratory discussions on a possible Canada-China free trade agreement," November 11, 2017 at <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/china-chine/fta-ale/background-contexte.aspx?lang=eng>.

<sup>6</sup> See Christopher Kilford, "Canada's New Defence Policy: A Huge Step in the Right Direction," July 2017 (Conference of Defence Associations Institute), at <https://cdainstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/KilfordAnalysisFinal.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Those interested in these issues should read David Johnston, [First Report](#), May 23, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> "There was simply no way for America to have so much information about what the Chinese were doing without having done some of the very same things itself..." This sneaking suspicion ended with his revelations about the massive US surveillance system in 2013 that marked "the so-called Western world's transformation from the creator and defender of the free internet to its opponent and prospective destroyer." Edward Snowden, *Permanent Record* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019), 171, 267.9

<sup>9</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 147.

<sup>10</sup> In the case of the US, this includes genocide in regard to Native Americans, slavery and its aftermath of continuing systemic discrimination against Blacks, and the illegal invasion of Iraq that began in 2003.

<sup>11</sup> John Bolton, *The Room Where it Happened* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 305. This passage reflects the contradictions or nuances between Trump, who was always looking for the next trade deal, and advisors such as Bolton who perceived China as an existential threat to US power.





Image: Canadian Dimension

to recover. The perception that Huawei, and thus Meng, were ‘malign actors’ and represented a major threat to US pre-eminence in technology, and thus a strategic threat to US global power, was behind this crisis that lasted for 33 months. The perceived techno-threat was acted upon and reinforced as a narrative in Canada through a series of measures: the suspension and subsequent firing of Xiangguo Qiu and Keding Cheng of the National Microbiology Laboratory (2019); the House of Commons resolution demanding the banning of Huawei (2020); announcement of the formation of a [Government of Canada - Universities Working Group](#) to develop science security guidelines; an Alberta government fiat instructing universities to cut ties, individual and organizational, with Chinese institutions; new guidelines for research partnerships issued for NSERC Alliance grants (2021); the banning of Huawei in 5G telecom networks; new policies to restrict Chinese foreign investment in critical minerals, and an order against three Chinese corporations forcing them to disinvest (2022); the banning of Tik Tok from government platforms followed by the banning of WeChat (2023). All of these measures were accompanied by extensive media hype, amplifying the “China threat” to justify the measures.

### China as Viral Threat

Meng and the two Michaels were still being held when the COVID-19 virus became a pandemic, and major counter-measures began in Canada. The *Vancouver Province* newspaper was quick to label the contagion in its headline, “Second China Virus Case in BC,” a refrain taken up and popularized by US president Donald Trump. The pandemic elicited a tremendous amount of vitriol against the PRC as the purported source of the virus, adding a new layer to the “China threat” discourse.

In January 2020, chief public health officer, Theresa Tam, remarked on and called out as “unacceptable and very hurtful,” social media attacks related to the coronavirus against people of Chinese or Asian descent. She herself came under attack when Conservative Party leadership contender, Derek Sloan, tweeted “Dr. Tam must go! Canada must remain sovereign over decisions. The UN, the WHO, and Chinese Communist propaganda must never again have a say over Canada’s public health!” Similar refrains were taken up by journalists who took aim at the PRC, vilifying it for its handling of the outbreak and suggesting that the CPC was using the outbreak “to realize the party’s long-game objective of fully eclipsing North America and Europe in the global order.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Terry Glavin, “The Coronavirus Pandemic is the Breakthrough Xi Jinping has been waiting for,” April 3, 2020, *Macleans*.

Racist attacks against those who appeared to be Asian quickly escalated, turning Vancouver into what was [called](#) the hate capital of the world. The attacks elicited a major fightback campaign among Asian Canadians. At the same time, CSIS and CSE (Communications Security Establishment) jointly [announced](#) that they were “near certain that state sponsored actors have shifted their focus during the pandemic, and that Canadian intellectual property represents a valuable target.”<sup>13</sup> The agencies added that they were working closely with the Five Eyes (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) spy network to reinforce national security. Collaborative international efforts to confront the contagion were not on Canada’s agenda.

### China as Interferer

Prior to the 2021 election, Conservative candidate Kenny Chiu [proposed](#) a Foreign Influence Registry that caused a backlash among some Chinese Canadians who then vented their anger on “WeChat”. After losing his election bid, Chiu accused the PRC of having orchestrated the campaign against him. Similar accusations of PRC interference surfaced sporadically, but then CSIS leaks to journalists regarding purported Chinese interference (supplemented by the RCMP alleging Chinese government operating “police stations” in Montreal’s Chinatown, a charge [refuted](#) by Chinese community organizations) created a major crisis for the Liberal government. They responded by announcing a special inquiry into foreign influence (David Johnston, Special Rapporteur), consultations on “Foreign Influence Transparency Registry” and other measures. These ended in a fiasco as opposition parties refused to accept Johnston’s preliminary report, forcing him to resign. The Liberal government was then forced to call a “Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions”, to be led by justice Marie-Josée Hogue. This public inquiry is underway.

Far from exhaustive, this list gives some idea of the successive stages and overlapping layers in the making of Canada’s “China panic”. The combination of state and media racializing discourse created what appeared to be a crisis.<sup>14</sup> A report on media coverage of the Meng detention suggests her arrest was “positioned as a continuing discourse about the dangers associated with China and

Chinese companies and less about Meng as an individual facing judicial hearings. Meng is positioned as a symbol of ‘China threat’.”<sup>15</sup> *Aljazeera* columnist Andrew Mitrovica, [describes](#) “a dangerous hysteria gripping Canada over the scope and nature of Chinese interference in Canadian elections and society, ginned up by scoop-thirsty reporters and timorous spies who do not give a damn about the human costs of their sinister handiwork.” The frenzy reeks, he says, “of the old ‘yellow peril’ canard.” Constant leaks from CSIS to the *Globe and Mail* were instrumental in sustaining the media frenzy. These were leaks that CSIS has been unable or unwilling to stop.

### 2018: Ground Zero in the Making of the China Threat

In some ways, history resembles epidemiology in that both have the task of finding the source and cause of what they are examining, for example, an epidemic, or a war. In the case of the “China threat”, the director of Canada’s research universities (U15) recounted that “The notion that national security guidelines will need to be built into the research ecosystem really came to the fore in 2018.”<sup>16</sup> This statement piqued our curiosity because 2018 was very early in the making of the “China threat” – Meng was only arrested at the end of 2018, and the pandemic and accusations of Chinese “interference” came later, in the main. So, this statement set off a search for events in 2018 that might have triggered the “China threat.” The paper trail from the beginning of 2018 provides important clues as to what has been going on.

As it turns out, Canada’s spy agency, CSIS, was the main source for the 2018 accusation regarding China’s techno-threat. More important, however, is the means by which CSIS determined that such a threat existed. One might expect that with thousands of employees and a billion-dollar budget between them, CSIS and the CSE (Canadian Security Establishment) might have come up with an independent assessment of actual challenges or threats in Canada. But, instead, Canada’s spy agencies relied on its counterparts in the United States.

In February 2018, six intelligence chiefs appointed by the Trump administration, (Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, CIA Director Mike Pompeo, FBI Director Chris Wray, NSA Director Adm. Michael Rogers, Defense In-

<sup>13</sup> CSE is mainly responsible for gathering Canadian and worldwide data and communications and CSIS is responsible for ‘threat’ investigations and assessment. For a critical assessment see the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group’s assessment.

<sup>14</sup> On discursive crises, Sean P. Her and Joshua L. Greenberg, “Constructing a Discursive Crisis: Risk, Problematization and *Illegal* Chinese in Canada,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25, 3 (May 2002), 490-513.

<sup>15</sup> See Daniella Silva, “Arresting a Chinese Tech-Princess: Discourses in the Canadian National New Media,” Summer 2019 (M.A. Study, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University), 45.

<sup>16</sup> See Brian Owens, “A New Era of Research Security,” *University Affairs* (July-August 2023), 12.

telligence Agency Director Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, and National Geospatial Intelligence Agency Director Robert Cardillo) appeared together before the Senate Intelligence Committee to assert that the government and the public should not use products or services from Huawei, as reported in both [CNBC](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#). The transcript of the testimony of FBI director Chris Wray includes this passage:

*So one of the things we're trying to do is view the China threat as not just a whole of government threat, but a whole of society threat on their end. I think it's going to take a whole of society response by us. So it's not just the intelligence community, but it's raising awareness within our academic sector, within our private sector, as part of the defense.<sup>17</sup>*

The “whole of society” designation implies that all “Chinese” are spies, an accusation that could be (and was) easily transferred to the Chinese diaspora (see the ‘China Initiative’, Part 2). “In addition to exaggerating enemy capabilities, threat inflation typically describes potential enemies as irrevocably hostile, irrational, and impossible to deter, which in turn implies that they must be removed,” according Harvard scholar Stephen M. Walt.<sup>18</sup> In this case, this takes the racializing form of turning the whole of the Chinese people into an imminent danger that requires extraordinary efforts by all American society to protect itself.

According to the National Security Agency, “We must defend our National Security Innovation Base (NSIB) against competitors. The NSIB is the American network of knowledge, capabilities, and people—including academia, National Laboratories, and the private sector—that turns ideas into innovations, transforms discoveries into successful commercial products and companies, and protects and enhances the American way of life.”<sup>19</sup> Presented

with such views, many people in Canada would take them with a grain of salt, seeing them as predictable nationalist performances from a Trump administration. Those with a sense of history might even have laughed, given the well-documented record of these agencies’ direct involvement in racial profiling, torture, and coup d’etats (see Appendix A).<sup>20</sup> But not CSIS.

Within weeks of the US Senate hearing, the Five Eyes spy consortium convened successive meetings, with CSIS director David Vigneault in attendance.<sup>21</sup> The first took place in London, UK during the Commonwealth conference in April 2018. The second occurred in July in Halifax. The strategy emerging from these meetings prompted what the Wall Street Journal [described](#) as an “unprecedented campaign” to portray China and Huawei as a major security risk to the Five Eyes telecommunications systems, particularly 5G networks. After both meetings, Five Eyes representatives, including Vigneault, met with Justin Trudeau to impress upon him the need for action against Huawei.<sup>22</sup> This is how the “China Threat” materialized in Canada.

CSIS’s uncritical reliance on US spy agencies is not new. In 2003, a security analyst revealed: “CSIS analysis of Iraq’s WMDs tended to support the claims coming from Washington. This is likely a reflection of the discomfort of CSIS managers and analysts at being out of step with the US intelligence community on a critical issue which might compromise their close operational links.”<sup>23</sup> In the case cited, a non-CSIS advisor told then prime minister Chretien to ignore CSIS, which he did, and Canada did not directly join in the US-led invasion of Iraq. CSIS, however, remains a true believer. As former agent Huda Mukbil recently described, “CSIS culture is like the military’s – you do as you’re told and don’t question anything. That’s

<sup>17</sup> “[Open Hearing on Worldwide Threats](#),” Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate, February 13, 2018 (Washington), 50

<sup>18</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions*, 153.

<sup>19</sup> POTUS, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, 2017), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 21. Similar language is used in the US 2018 Defence planning, see Jim Mattis, “Summary of the 2018 National Defence Strategy of the United States of America,” (Department of Defence, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> On how the CIA manipulated and exaggerated threat assessments see Melvin A. Goodman, *Whistleblower at the CIA: An Insider’s Account of the Politics of Intelligence* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2017). For details of NSA transgressions, see the on-line resource “[The Snowden Affair](#),” a collection of over 125 documents that document NSA’s surveillance activities, edited by Jeffrey T. Richelson, National Security Archive of George Washington University, as well as [Wikileaks](#).

<sup>21</sup> Sources on the history of the Five Eyes are lacking. See Richard Kerbaj, *The Secret History of the Five Eyes* (London: Blink, 2022), Anthony R. Wells, *Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing* (London: Casemate, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> This was reported in a *Globe and Mail* article in September 2018 based on unattributed sources. This article aimed to push Trudeau to ban Huawei, but it has far-reaching implications – the fact Trudeau was informed about the Five Eyes campaign before his government detained Meng Wanzhou suggests that his defence that this was simply “the rule of law” at work was, at best, disingenuous, and more likely a purposeful misleading of Canadians.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Barnes, “Getting it Right: Canadian Intelligence Assessments on Iraq, 2002-2003,” *Intelligence and National Security*, 35.7, (2020), 933-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2020.1771934>

what intelligence officers sign up for.”<sup>24</sup> CSIS’s record of Islamophobia, spying on environmental and Indigenous groups, and collaborating in US schemes involving extraordinary rendition and torture reflect their close affinity with the values of their US counterparts.

Canada is not the only country that has been subjected to the US-sponsored discourse on the “China threat.” A recent study of island nations found “most notably the prominence of the USA government as either a direct or indirect actor in localising and activating the China threat discourse.”<sup>25</sup> Australia has also gone through a similar experience.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Chretien’s defiance of CSIS in 2003, however, the Liberal government in 2018 fully embraced the “China threat” as articulated by CSIS. This set Canada on the road to confrontation with the PRC, one that exploded with the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou that December, and that was continuously amplified through the successive phases of the pandemic and later claims of ‘foreign interference’. Since the 2019 federal election, the Liberal government has only been able to form a minority government and has relied on the federal New Democratic Party (NDP) to stay in power. The position of the NDP on the “China threat” is critical to understanding the prolonged and intense crisis in Canada-China relations.

### NDP as Cold Warrior

Canada’s inability to manage the crisis is related to the fact the Liberal Party, led by Justin Trudeau, heads a minority government that owes its existence since 2021 to a supply and services agreement with the NDP. On the issue of China, the federal NDP has adopted a zealous anti-communist stance that has scuttled every attempt by the Liberals to contain the crisis. The NDP has been working hand in glove with the Conservatives and Bloc Québécois to attack the PRC and undermine Trudeau’s government. For example:

- The federal NDP [pushed](#) to ban Huawei from the 5G network beginning in 2020, aligning itself with the Five

Eyes from the beginning;

- The NDP followed the lead of Trump right-hand man, Mike Pompeo, in labelling China’s repression of Uyghurs as genocide, even though lawyers in the State Department [disputed](#) that designation.
- In regard to the inquiry by former governor-general David Johnston, it was a federal NDP representative who stood up in parliament on May 30 to introduce a motion calling for Johnston to resign. Thanks to the alliance between the NDP, the Conservative and the Bloc Québécois the motion passed 175-150 and precipitated Johnston’s resignation.
- Similarly, the federal NDP plays a key role in the triumvirate that is behind the House of Commons Special Committee on Canada-People’s Republic of China Relations (CACN), formed in December 2019. Denis Trudel (Bloc Québécois), Heather McPherson (NDP), and Michael Chong (Conservatives) served as vice-chairs of this special committee, and tabled an interim report that proposes Canada “make efforts to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and AUKUS security pact in order to bolster Canada’s presence in the Indo-Pacific region to counter the People’s Republic of China’s threats to the region.”<sup>27</sup>
- A representative of the NDP sponsored a parliamentary petition demanding the government set up a foreign influence registry quickly, and criticizing the anti-racist actions of others in the community.

This unusual alliance of the federal NDP with the two other opposition parties represents a merging of a racializing Sinophobia on the part of the Conservatives and Bloc Québécois, with a trend among some racialized activists in the NDP to demonize China, not for racial reasons, but out of hatred of China’s actions in Hong Kong. The dynamics of Canada’s anti-racist movement helps illuminate the dynamics involved.

### Sinophobia and Anti-Communism

Anti-racist activists and scholars have challenged the Sinophobia associated with the overlapping threat discourses that have emerged over the past five years. In May

<sup>24</sup> Huda Mukbil, *Agent of Change* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2023), 108. For another perspective on CSIS see Stephanie Carvin, Thomas Juneau, and Craig Forcese, eds., *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Grydehøj et al, “Practicing decolonial political geography: Island perspectives on neocolonialism and the China threat discourse,” *Political Geography* 85 (2021) 102330, 1-11.

<sup>26</sup> Brophy, *The China Panic*.

<sup>27</sup> The AUKUS security [pact](#) is a \$386 billion deal between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) that will see Australia acquire up to eight nuclear-powered submarines from the US or UK. Initialed in March, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, winner of the 2017 Nobel peace prize, has said the deal risked further nuclear proliferation and could be a precursor to Australia obtaining nuclear weapons. James Acton of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said the deal caused “real and concrete” harm to the non-proliferation regime.

2020, for example, Carleton University's Xiaobei Chen and a group of Chinese Canadian professors launched a petition challenging Global News journalist Sam Cooper's racializing portrayal of "millions of Chinese Canadians" buying up PPT and jeopardizing Canada's own efforts. Cooper responded by alleging that behind the petition was "the hand of Beijing."<sup>28</sup> Chinese Canadians were put in an untenable position of wearing masks and risking racist abuse, or not wearing them and risking contracting COVID.

Professor Thy Phu (University of Toronto) highlighted how the pandemic made Sinophobia "palpable in the moral panic evinced about primitive tastes and backward practices, unhygienic conditions at foreign wet markets, and unseemly appetites for exotic animals. Sinophobia is also the force that animates conspiracy theories, which blame China for concocting the novel coronavirus with the intention of unleashing it upon the world—theories that have gone viral despite efforts to debunk them."<sup>29</sup>

The mobilization against anti-Asian racism during COVID pushed the "China as a virus" discourse into the background as narratives about China as a techno-threat came to the fore. Asian American scholars were among the first to identify this issue: "Arguably, the yellow peril of today represents heightened Western anxieties around China's combined forces of population size, global economic growth, and rapid technological-scientific innovation—all of which emerge from a political system that is considered ideologically oppositional to ours. The current context, we suggest, is best understood through the lens of techno-Orientalism."<sup>30</sup> The ideological system referred to is communism and points to how this particular form of Sinophobia and anti-communism often go together. The following example illustrates this.

When the Meng-Michaels exchange took place in September 2021, Canadian senator Yuen Pau Woo welcomed the two Canadians home and suggested the need to learn from the experience. In his [tweet](#), he referenced an article that stated that the "US assisted by Canada, took Meng hostage in the first place as part of its trade-and-technology war with China." The racist outrage in response was breathtaking in its vitriol. Former Conservative minister of

immigration, Chris Alexander tweeted: "Mouthpieces for foreign propaganda, including those backed by China's United Front Work Department, should have no place in Canada's parliament." Alexander's tweet was shared by others who referred to Woo as "pond scum," a "Chinese commie f—" who should be "sent back to China along with Meng," according to the Canadian Press [report](#).

Xiaobei Chen has elaborated on the intersection of racism and anti-communism, attesting to the way in which the racial profiling of Chinese Canadians as "communist spies sabotaging national interests is happening with increasing frequency in the media, governments, and other institutions."<sup>31</sup> Part of the problem, she states, is a binary concept of Chinese Canadians "as either Good Chinese (i.e., victims of the Chinese Communist Party) or Bad Chinese (i.e., Communist Party accomplices). Chen argues that multiculturalism and foreign policy have become "conduits for discourses of prejudice to be perpetuated."<sup>32</sup> In [Australian Foreign Affairs](#), Yun Jiang highlights the specific dilemma this poses for those brought up in China, but who are now resident in other countries, such as Australia or Canada.

Criticism of the PRC is to be expected; however, some of the criticism crosses a threshold from legitimate critique to demonization arising out of racial anxieties. But not all. In March 2023, Yuen Pau Woo tweeted that a foreign interference registry might be a modern form of Chinese exclusion and referred to the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act that had forced all Chinese Canadians to register. He was pilloried on Twitter (now X) with comments such as "Wouldn't expect less from a hanjian". Hong Kong activist Nathan Law tweeted "Opposed the Uyghur Genocide bill, supported Beijing's Winter Olympics, and claimed that China has a "legitimate" legal system. Now this ridiculous comparison. Time will tell now who needs to register as a foreign agent. [#CCP](#)." In this case, the inference that Woo would have to register as a foreign agent stems not from racism but rather from hatred of the Chinese Communist Party for what transpired in Hong Kong. As understandable as such sentiments might be, they, too, cross a line by unjustly implying that someone is a foreign agent because they hold differing views on the future of Cana-

<sup>28</sup> Xiaobei Chen, "[Understanding the Roots of Systemic Anti-Asian Racism](#)," November 7, 2021, *One Pacific News*.

<sup>29</sup> Thy Phu, "Our Masks, Our Selves," *Pandemics Special issue of Canadian Literature* 245 (2021): 16-20

<sup>30</sup> Lok Siu, Claire Chun, "Yellow Peril and Techno-orientalism in the Time of Covid-19: Racialized Contagion, Scientific Espionage, and Techno-Economic Warfare," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 23, 3 (October 2020), 425. [10.1353/jaas.2020.0033](#)

<sup>31</sup> Xiaobei Chen, "[Multiculturalism & Canada-China Relations](#)," June 22, 2022 (Institute of Peace and Developments China Strategy Project), *Ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Chen, "Multiculturalism & Canada-China Relations," 6.

da-China relations. This is a form of anti-communism that has historically gone hand-in-hand with McCarthyism in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Coming to grips with the intersection of racism and anti-communism poses important challenges. When Arab Canadian activist Khaled Mouammar wrote to Evan Dyer of the CBC to suggest that the Conservative Party campaign regarding alleged Chinese interference would intensify racism faced by Chinese Canadians, Dwyer responded:

*“Sorry Khaled, Canada is a sovereign country and has the right to defend itself from a hostile dictatorship. This is not about race or racism. In fact, some of the loudest voices calling for Canada to do more to stand up to China are Chinese-Canadians. The individuals most affected by this kind of interference are ethnic Chinese, such as Hong Kong pro-democracy activists who are being intimidated in person, by phone, and by social media. I would add that the motion I reported on was brought forward by a Canadian MP whose name is Chong. Meanwhile some of the Chinese Communist Party’s loudest defenders in Canada have no ethnic connection to China, but perhaps share an ideological affinity with the Communist Party, or have a financial*

*stake in placating the Chinese Communist Party, such as one of our former ambassadors to Beijing. I intend to continue to cover this important topic. Thanks for writing.”<sup>34</sup>*

Relying on the fact that Chinese Canadians are involved in the campaign against China, Dwyer suggests that racism is not involved. He goes on to dismiss those who differ as either ideologues for the CCP or lining their pockets with Peking gold. This interchange, and Dyer’s insidious generalizations, reflect how easily reporters can fall into the trap of relying on anti-communism to deflect and minimize the dangers of anti-Asian racism. That is unfortunate and can only prolong the “China Panic” that is promoting fear and divisions in many communities and distorting the challenges ahead.

As new issues come to the fore, such as the Modi government’s apparent involvement in extraterritorial assassinations, or Israel’s assault on Gaza, the “China Panic” may appear to be receding in Canada; however, the crisis will not be easily resolved. It continues to simmer and has already given rise to new systems of research surveillance and censorship in universities, and to dangerous new military policies in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The persecution of Chinese Americans as spies for China is told in Iris Chang, *Thread of the Silkworm* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Wen Ho Lee and Helen Zia, *My Country Versus Me: The First-Hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who Was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy* (Hyperion, 2003); and Charlotte Brooks, *Between Mao and McCarthy: Chinese American Politics in the Cold War Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence between Khaled Mouammar and Evan Dyer, November 24, 2020. With permission.

<sup>35</sup> We have introduced the formulation “Asia and the Pacific” here as an alternative to “Asia Pacific” or “Indo-Pacific”. As Jodi Kim suggests it is important to distinguish between Asia and the Pacific, with the latter being the site of Indigenous communities that have been subject to deracination and dispossession. See Jodi Kim, *Settler Garrison: Debt Imperialism, Militarism, and Transpacific Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2022), 30-32.

# PART 2

## U15-CSIS Collaboration: The Perils of Geopolitics and Research Surveillance Systems

*“We want to express our deep concerns about the seemingly growing campus presence of CSIS and the effects of this on students, faculty, and University of Waterloo’s reputation. Specifically, we want to stress the unwelcoming and intimidating atmosphere their presence is creating on campus.”*

– Open Letter to president of University of Waterloo, 77 faculty, April 2023

Over the past five years, the top fifteen research universities in Canada (the U15) have been collaborating with the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) to develop what are termed “national security research guidelines.” Unfortunately, the emerging guidelines are based not on actual threats to research such as ransomware attacks, abuse of AI (artificial intelligence), or war, but on a nebulous “China Threat.” CSIS and the U15 have put geopolitics ahead of research security in new guidelines that will soon apply to all research grants funded by the government of Canada. Already universities are putting in place the infrastructure for rigorous screening, turning research safety into a research surveillance process that is embedding CSIS on campus.

These policies have elicited growing consternation. Chinese Canadian scholars first sounded the alarm regarding racial profiling, seeing distinct parallels with similar developments in the United States. As it became clear that the government intended to expand the screening to all projects involving research partnerships with colleagues in China, more voices of concern surfaced, as illustrated by the introductory quote above. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has since intervened, expressing its concerns regarding racial profiling and the need to protect academic freedom. University researchers (including faculty, research fellows, and graduate students), faculty associations, and professional organizations in Canada now find themselves at a crossroads – they must decide on how to respond to the new guidelines.

This study aims to assist in that process. It provides a chronological overview of the origins and development of the research guidelines as background. It then focuses again on the year 2018, documenting how CSIS first held meetings with the U15 to promote the geopolitical ‘China Threat’; finally, it examines the impact of substituting geopolitics and threat inflation for research security in the US and Canada, focusing on both similarities (racial profiling) but also critical differences.

### Trajectories of CSIS/U15 Collaboration<sup>1</sup>

Chad Gaffield, the CEO of the U-15, stated: “The notion that national security guidelines will need to be built into the research ecosystem really came to the fore in 2018.”<sup>2</sup> Using this year as a baseline, the following chronology tracks the evolution of the research guidelines.

In 2018, the U15 met with David Vigneault, the newly minted director of CSIS, as well as other representatives of CSIS or its intelligence gathering arm, the Canadian Security Establishment (CSE). CSIS warned that the Peoples’ Republic of China represented a significant threat to university research. At CSIS’s request, the Public Health Agency of Canada ordered a security review of the National Microbiology Laboratory, leading to the suspension and then firing of award-winning scientist Dr. Xianguo Qiu in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

In 2019, CSIS created a Stakeholder Engagement Unit.<sup>4</sup> Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISE) took on responsibility for inter-agency meetings and

<sup>1</sup> This background material is derived from published primary material, newspaper records, and four recent publications: John Lorinc, “Chinese Research Collaborations under the Microscope,” *Bulletin* 70, 6 (2023), 12-17; Brian Owens, “A New Era of Research Security,” *University Affairs*, June 14, 2023; Paul Evans “Canadian Universities & China: Research Collaborations in Question,” September 2022 (Institute for Peace and Diplomacy); Catherine Lathem, “A Pivotal Moment: CSIS Steps out of the Shadows to Protect Canada’s Biopharmaceutical and Healthcare Sectors during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Public Policy Forum*, (Ottawa), 1-9.

<sup>2</sup> See Brian Owens, “A New Era of Research Security,” *University Affairs* (July-August 2023), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Ling, “The Qiu Files,” *Macleans Magazine* (March 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Evans, “Canadian Universities,” 2.

working with Universities Canada and U15, from which emerged a Government of Canada-Universities Working Group.<sup>5</sup>

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, an arm of the CSE, issued [Alert - Cyber threats to Canadian health organizations](#) advising “Sophisticated threat actors may attempt to steal the intellectual property (IP) of organizations engaged in research and development related to COVID-19, or sensitive data related to Canada’s response to COVID-19.” CSIS’s mandate was broadened to identify “research entities, university labs and health networks across the country” to assure that they were aware of potential threats, particularly in the biomedical sphere. CSIS appointed a new director general of academic outreach and stakeholder engagement, who described CSIS’s new motto: “Spies are no longer wearing trench coats, they’re wearing lab coats.”<sup>6</sup> That October, a [National Post](#) article implied that Dr. Ke Wu, an award-winning researcher at Polytechnique Montréal, had a double career in the PRC. Wu refuted the charges but has faced lingering suspicions.

In May 2020, the intelligence agencies issued a [Joint CSE and CSIS Statement](#) warning that “it is near certain that state sponsored actors have shifted their focus during the pandemic, and that Canadian intellectual property represents a valuable target.”<sup>7</sup> The statement asserted that the Canadian government was working closely with its “Five Eyes” alliance partners, including the US.

Then, in early 2021, the ISE issued a [“Research Policy Statement – Spring 2021”](#) in which it announced that a newly formed Government of Canada-Universities Working Group would be issuing new national security risk guidelines.

Prior to the guidelines appearing, however, Alberta’s Minister of Advanced Education unilaterally ordered Alberta universities to cut ties, individual and organizational, with all Chinese institutions, in response to unverified charges in a media [article](#).

In July 2021, ISE announced [National Research Guidelines for Research Partnerships](#) for those applying for

NSERC-Alliance grants. Researchers were forced to fill out a Risk Assessment Form that many researchers found problematic.

In late January 2023, the Globe and Mail published a [report](#) alleging that researchers in Canadian universities had collaborated with researchers at the PRC’s National University of Defense Technology. The insinuation was that this constituted military espionage, a questionable conclusion given the way in which Canada’s own military seeks to “support and leverage the expertise of Canada’s defence and security academic community.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the government responded in a knee-jerk attempt at policymaking in a [Statement](#) from Minister Champagne, Minister Duclos and Minister Mendicino on protecting Canada’s research that ordered “the Canada Foundation for Innovation and Canada’s federal research granting councils—the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, as well as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research—adopt a further enhanced posture regarding national security.”

This episode marked a major escalation in government preparations to institutionalize research surveillance. New guidelines are being developed in consultation with the Government of Canada-Universities Working Group and the government is opening a new research security centre. The government expects universities to apply the new guidelines in all research projects, government-funded or not.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers began to question the government’s approach and established a National Security Reference Group to monitor and consider possible actions to be taken.<sup>9</sup> In April, 77 researchers at the University of Waterloo wrote to the president in response to memos from the administration, one on “Safeguarding Research” and the other outlining what to do if contacted by CSIS.<sup>10</sup> It stated that researchers were not required to talk to CSIS agents. Faculty expressed their appreciation for the advice regarding CSIS and emphasized: “At the same time, we want to express our deep concerns about the seemingly growing campus presence of CSIS and the effects of this on students, faculty, and University of Waterloo’s reputation. Specifically, we want

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Lathem, “A Pivotal Moment,” 2

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Lathem, “A Pivotal Moment,” 1.

<sup>7</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Canada, Department of Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017), 63, 67, 73. Besides funding technology research, the CAF also funds many university thinktanks through its [MINDS](#) program.

<sup>9</sup> See John Lorinc, “Chinese Research Collaborations Under the Microscope,” *The Bulletin* (September 2023, Canadian Association of University of Professors), 12-17.

<sup>10</sup> Private copy in possession of author.



to stress the unwelcoming and intimidating atmosphere their presence is creating on campus.”

A clearer understanding of the nature of CSIS-U15 collaboration requires turning back to the year 2018, when CSIS first approached university presidents.

## 2018: Examining the Origins of CSIS/U15 Collaboration

CSIS began discussions with U15 in the spring of 2018, before they or other government agencies had developed specific policies regarding research, and well before the December 2018 arrest of Huawei executive, Meng Wanzhou, that sparked a crisis in Canada-China relations. A careful review of what happened in 2018 is revealing.

According to information obtained through FOI requests and [reported](#) in the National Post, the director of CSIS met with representatives of U15 on numerous occasions, including:

**APRIL 2018:** In a meeting with university presidents, CSIS head David Vigneault explicitly stated that China represents “the most significant and clear” challenge when it comes to espionage targeting Canadian campuses.<sup>11</sup>

**OCTOBER 2018 (a):** Vigneault told a cybersecurity workshop: “CSIS assesses that China represents the most significant and clear challenge for (human-enabled espionage) targeted against Canada’s universities.” China’s use of “non-traditional collectors (NTCs),” such as students and researchers, to acquire sensitive and proprietary information from Canadians is particularly challenging, he stated. He continued, “NTCs have little-to-no formal intelligence tradecraft training but are often in a position to acquire vast quantities of data or knowledge.”

**OCTOBER 2018 (b):** In a second meeting that October, CSIS officials told a meeting of U15 vice-presidents that they should be cautious about their research relationship with Huawei, the Chinese telecommunication corporation.

<sup>11</sup> The speeches were released as a result of an FOI request by journalist Douglas Quan.

<sup>12</sup> “[Open Hearing on Worldwide Threats](#),” Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate, February 13, 2018 (Washington), 50

<sup>13</sup> “We must defend our National Security Innovation Base (NSIB) against competitors. The NSIB is the American network of knowledge, capabilities, and people—including academia, National Laboratories, and the private sector—that turns ideas into innovations, transforms discoveries into successful commercial products and companies, and protects and enhances the American way of life.” POTUS, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, 2017), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 21. Similar language is used in the US 2018 Defence planning, see Jim Mattis, “Summary of the 2018 National Defence Strategy of the United States of America,” (Department of Defence, 2017).

The timing of these meetings with U15 officials corresponds to two summits (April and July) of national spy agencies that are part of the Five Eyes. As described in Part 1, these meetings were part of an “unprecedented campaign” to portray China and Huawei as a major security risk to the Five Eyes telecommunications systems, particularly 5G networks. What Vigneault brought to the U15, however, was not an independent, verifiable analysis of global or Canadian circumstances, but a wholesale adoption of a geopolitical stance articulated by US intelligence agencies under Donald Trump.

That stance was articulated before a hearing on “Worldwide Threats,” sponsored by the Senate Intelligence Committee in February 2018. The transcript of the testimony of FBI director Chris Wray includes this passage:

*I think in this setting I would just say that the use of nontraditional collectors, especially in the academic setting, whether it's professors, scientists, students, we see in almost every field office that the FBI has around the country. It's not just in major cities. It's in small ones as well. It's across basically every discipline. I think the level of naivete on the part of the academic sector about this creates its own issues. They're exploiting the very open research and development environment that we have, which we all revere, but they're taking advantage of it.<sup>12</sup>*

Wray’s allegations that “professors, scientists, students” in universities were being used as spies was shared by the National Security Agency and Department of Defense and was the basis for the campaign that ensued. In the United States, it inspired the FBI’s “China Initiative” that year, a program terminated in the face of broad opposition (see below).<sup>13</sup>

Noteworthy here, however, is the way in which both Wray (FBI) before the Senate committee, and Vigneault (CSIS) in his meetings with the U15, used the same language (e.g. “nontraditional collectors”), and that both targeted China and Huawei. It seems that Vigneault and CSIS plucked their information directly from the FBI geopolitical playbook on “Worldwide Threats,” and failed to factually de-

termine whether this “worldwide” threat actually applied to Canada before presenting it as fact to U15 representatives in 2018.<sup>14</sup> Given the track records of both CSIS and US intelligence agencies (see Appendix A), close scrutiny of their assertions seems advisable.

Yet U15 university leaders, all scholars, failed to submit CSIS assertions to any form of scientific scrutiny. This would appear to represent a major failure of leadership on the part of the Canadian academy.<sup>15</sup> Over the next four years, CSIS and the U15 collaborated closely to develop research surveillance measures targeting the People’s Republic of China. Initially, those measures moved in tandem with what transpired in the United States, but then took on a life of their own.

## Racial Profiling: The United States and Canada

In the United States, the upshot of this “unprecedented campaign” soon became apparent. A few months after the Senate hearings, the then US attorney general [unveiled](#) the ‘China Initiative’ to “Combat Chinese Economic Espionage.” KC Cole, senior correspondent for Wired and an instructor at the University of Washington, recently characterized the program in [Scientific American](#) as “McCarthy-style bullying, aimed at disrupting research collaborations perceived as benefitting China at the expense of the U.S., cost hundreds of scientists their jobs and funding, wrecked dozens of productive research relationships and spread fear among valued Chinese collaborators.” The American Civil Liberties Union, for example, wrote: “The initiative was accompanied by xenophobic, anti-China rhetoric from the Trump White House, as well as public statements by the FBI director that cast suspicion on virtually anyone with family or professional ties to China – thousands of accomplished Asian American and immigrant scientists who have contributed to our country for years. The statements have encouraged racial profiling and discrimination, including within the FBI.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> [Testifying](#) before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in June 2023, Vigneault hints at the basis for his analysis of 2018 that prompted his warnings to universities. “The scales continue to tilt toward state threats, and new state threats have unfortunately been weighing on Canada since China emerged as both a major economic state and a geostrategically destabilizing one, and since the unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Russia. In a speech that I gave in 2018, my first speech as director, I mentioned that the threat that hostile states represent, which includes foreign interference, was the most significant threat to Canada’s security and sovereignty.”

<sup>15</sup> Why this failure occurred requires a longer discussion than the constraints of this paper allow. However, the fact Canadian universities are publicly funded to an important degree can, in this instance, lead to conformist tendencies in the desire to maintain that funding.

<sup>16</sup> As cited in Jenny J. Lee, Xiaojie Li, “Neo-Racism, Neo-Nationalism, and the Costs for Scientific Competitiveness: The China Initiative in the United States,” *The Review of Higher Education*, 46, 3 (Spring 2023), 288.

<sup>17</sup> Jenny J. Lee, Xiaojie Li, “Neo-Racism, Neo-Nationalism, and the Costs for Scientific Competitiveness: The China Initiative in the United States,” 297-298.

<sup>18</sup> Yu Xie, Xihong Lin, Ju Li, Qian He and Junming Huang, “Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists,” *PNAS* (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences)120, 27 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2216248120>.

<sup>19</sup> Siu and Chun, “Yellow Peril and Techno-Orientalism,” 430.

The Biden administration was obliged to halt the program last year after overwhelming criticism from scientists, Chinese American organizations, and civil rights groups. The China initiative saw the FBI open thousands of investigations over its three-year existence; only 77 of whichever led to prosecutions. Of these, only about a quarter led to convictions, and most of those had little to do with national security, according to an [investigation](#) by MIT Technology Review. A recent study revealed that over forty percent of Chinese and Asian scientists felt targeted by neo-racism and neo-nationalism.<sup>17</sup> Another recent study, published in [PNAS](#) (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences) revealed similar “general feelings of fear and anxiety that lead them to consider leaving the United States and/or stop applying for federal grants.”<sup>18</sup>

Driving racial profiling is the trope of techno-orientalism, a technologically-imbued form of racism that posits that America is losing power (technological, but also economic, military and cultural) due to the scheming of a diabolical, communist aggressor. This frame is constructed through statements such as those of the FBI director Christopher Wray and David Vigneault in regard to China and the “Chinese” as a “whole of society threat,” that are then amplified by the media, and buttressed by state directives (tariffs, sanctions, prohibitions against Huawei) that reinforce the notion of China as an illiberal enemy responsible for espionage, intellectual property theft, and unfair competition. Such assertions draw on the deep well of historical anti-Chinese racism and help to “crystallize in the popular imagination the racial trope of the Chinese “scientist-as-spy.” This is reminiscent of the “evil criminal genius” of the fictional character Dr. Fu Manchu—and made visible the targeted criminalization of this highly educated class of ethnic Chinese scientists and engineers.”<sup>19</sup>

Ironically, the concept of techno-Orientalism was first articulated as a means of understanding the backlash against Japan and things Japanese in the 1980s when the

Japanese economy was outperforming the US economy.<sup>20</sup> Popular racism of that era prompted two racists, a Chrysler plant supervisor and his laid-off autoworker stepson, to murder [Vincent Chin](#), mistakenly believing he was “Japanese” and responsible for the loss of jobs in the American automobile industry. At the time, a popular myth about Japan’s economic success was that they were good imitators but had little capacity for innovation and were dependent on US technology. This is also the inference regarding Huawei and Chinese technology generally – that they could only have achieved so much by stealing technology from the US or Canada. Technological competition can be fierce and unethical, and illegal actions to obtain knowledge happen by all the players, be they American, Japanese, Korean, or Chinese. Yet such allegations cannot deny the reality that in 2019 “Chinese universities produced 49,498 PhDs in STEM fields, while U.S. universities produced 33,759. Based on current enrollment patterns, the report projects that by 2025 China’s yearly STEM PhD graduates (77,179) will nearly double those in the United States (39,959).”<sup>21</sup> The PRC rush to become self-reliant in technology is only being reinforced by the prohibitions against Huawei, an unintended but real consequence of the US campaign.

In Canada, the CSIS-inspired “China panic” initially had similar impacts to those in the United States, but then developed its own Canada-specific dynamic. One of the first cases of direct CSIS intervention against Chinese Canadian scientists was at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg.<sup>22</sup> According to one [report](#), Drs. Xianguo Qiu, winner of a Governor-General’s Innovation Award for developing the ZMAb antidote for Ebola virus, and her husband, Keding Cheng, were suspended in 2019, and later fired after CSIS instigated an NML security review in 2018. Neither NML nor the government have made public the specific reasons for the actions.

Around this time, mainstream media began to focus on this topic, as illustrated by a National Post [article](#) of 2020 that accused award-winning researcher, Dr Ke Wu of École Polytechnique of having a duplicitous second career in China, a report [rebutted](#) by Wu as well as by the Association of Chinese Canadian Professors in Quebec.

As CSIS’s campaign gained currency with the U15, however, the main thrust of government policy transitioned

away from legal prosecutions (risking CSIS sources). Instead, universities themselves have become the main conduit for research screening, incorporating CSIS/CSE’s program. Thus, we saw the formation of the Government of Canada-Universities Working Group in 2021, and the publication by ISE of the National Security Guidelines that summer. The incorporation of CSIS’s geopolitical biases into research funding protocols highlights how Canada’s path to research surveillance and racial profiling differs from the US “China Initiative”.

Instead, Canada’s guidelines parallel a process of censorship similar in many ways to a campaign of intimidation undertaken by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH). A [report](#) published in Science reveals the ways in which the NIH resorted to secret, in-house pressures against targeted academics that “upended hundreds of lives and destroyed scores of academic careers.” The imminent arrival of the new CSIS/U15 research guidelines, to be applied across all funding agencies, risks reproducing a frightening research screening process that takes place behind the closed doors of research security offices with little opportunity for appeal or for public scrutiny. Even now, rumours are circulating that CSIS operatives or former operatives are being hired for these offices.

Unease among researchers in Canada has been steadily increasing. As [reported](#) in the summer of 2021, a letter to university administrators from the Canadian Academy of Chinese Professors and the Canadian Association of Chinese Professors asserted their opposition to the new risk assessment process and their fears of becoming victims of racial profiling.

After a series of webinars with concerned researchers, CAUT has recently taken up the case. In an editorial in the CAUT Bulletin, executive director David Robinson warned that academic freedoms can be vulnerable at times of heightened national security, pointing to the anti-communist witch hunts of the 1950s and 1960s. “There may be legitimate national security risks arising from academic research, but we as a community have to guard against overreach,” he writes. “We must ensure that academics are not targeted because of their ethnicity, and that rules are not so broad as to restrict legitimate research and scholarship. Nor should a foreign influence law be

<sup>20</sup> Siu and Chun point to the work of David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London, UK: Routledge, 1995) as initially articulating the concept of techno-Orientalism.

<sup>21</sup> Remco Zwetsloot, et al, *China is Fast Outpacing U.S. STEM PhD Growth*, (Center for Security and Emerging Technology, August 2021). My thanks to Lin Cai for pointing out this source.

<sup>22</sup> See Justin Ling, “The Qiu Files,” *Maclean’s Magazine* (March 2022), <https://macleans.ca/longforms/winnipeg-virus-lab-scientist>

misused to target academics who are critical of Canada's military or foreign policy."<sup>23</sup>

A petition of 77 researchers at the University of Waterloo in April 2023 (see p. 16) added to ongoing concerns. CAUT has since created a National Security Reference Group to monitor developments, and a recent feature article in the CAUT Bulletin highlighted one research security office that had posted a list of Chinese universities to be avoided. After protests from faculty, the list was pulled, but it highlighted the risks of overreach and the real fears among some faculty members.<sup>24</sup> A recent survey undertaken by York University professor Qiang Zha has shown that among researchers familiar with the CSIS guidelines for research, forty percent felt "considerable fear and/or anxiety that they were being surveilled by the Canadian government."<sup>25</sup> This and related findings from this survey strongly suggest that racial profiling is already occurring in Canada as it did in the US, though the program and means may differ.

In the short term, the situation can only worsen: [accord-ing](#) to Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry (ISI), François-Philippe Champagne, the government is set to announce a list of 'high risk' research organizations related to strategic research areas.

A recent federal court [decision](#) to deny a Chinese PhD student a visa because he might be a "Non-Traditional Collector" (NTC) of intelligence has further shaken the research community. As described earlier, the NTC definition is right out of the FBI playbook, imported by CSIS, and has now found its way into the judiciary. This despite the publicly acknowledged failure of the US China Initiative that was predicated on the NTC concept. Even more worrisome, is that CSIS is increasing its public profile and openly lobbying for increased powers through "[Public Safety Canada](#)."

## The Present

CSIS director David Vigneault recently asserted that CSIS efforts with the "principals of the largest Canadian research universities," have been so successful that it has come "to the point now it is them asking us, you know, how can we work together?" Vigneault's remarks came in a public roundtable at the US Hoover Institute in October with his counterparts from the Five Eyes.<sup>26</sup> "We won't tell the universities who to hire," stated Vigneault at the session, but does that mean CSIS won't say who not to hire, or, what projects not to approve?

Universities are, indeed, pushing ahead to implement the CSIS agenda. Universities are receiving millions in funds to create structures of research surveillance. These monies are part of Research Support Funds from the Canadian government and are being distributed by rankings; for example, UVic received \$356,166, McGill and UBC received over \$2 million each, and U of T received over \$4 million. Full listings are available [here](#). One university that received such funds began to publish new research restrictions with Chinese universities but quickly withdrew their list after being challenged by the faculty association.<sup>27</sup>

This June, the U15 (the main consortium of research universities) published "[Safeguarding Research in Canada](#)," promising to promote policies to:

- Complement federal government guidelines
- Develop "open and frequent" communication with ISSED and Public Safety Canada
- Incorporate DEI principles to "mitigate the effects of racial and ethnic profiling on the academic community"
- Ensure compliance with John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act Section 889(a)(b), public law 115-232 that bars any funding for universities that use prohibited equipment, ie. Huawei"

<sup>23</sup> David Robinson, "Academic Freedom and National Security," *Bulletin*, 70, 5 (May-June 2023), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Private copy in possession of author.

<sup>25</sup> For details see Lorinc, "Chinese Research Collaborations Under the Microscope."

<sup>26</sup> Qiang Zha and Xiaojie Li, "Caught in geopolitical tensions: how do Canadian faculty of Chinese origin perceive their professional value and working conditions?" *Canadian Ethnic Studies* (forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> A [video](#) of Vigneault's remarks was part of Catherine Tunney's [article](#), "CSIS Chief Opens Up about China's Interest in Canadian Universities," October 17, 2023

<sup>28</sup> See Lorinc, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Midori Ogasawara, "Legalizing Illegal Mass Surveillance: A Transnational Perspective on Canada's Legislative Response to the Expansion of Security Intelligence," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society / La Revue Canadienne Droit et Société*, Volume 37, Issue 2, August 2022, pp. 317 – 338. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2022.9>

Does this mean the U15 accepts racial profiling and now just want to “mitigate” its effects? What is interesting in this document is that nowhere does it mention CSIS yet the U15, ISE, Public Safety Canada, and the RCMP work closely together and rely on CSIS for leadership.

Since ‘the war on terror,’ CSIS has become emboldened and has pressed hard to ingratiate themselves with university administrations.<sup>28</sup> The fact the U15 has bought into the CSIS narrative without any critical evaluation is alarming. It can be explained by the fact that Canadian universities are largely dependent on Canadian and provincial governments for both core and research funding. This has provided an important point of leverage for CSIS. While universities certainly have an obligation to safeguard their sources of research funding, they also have an obligation to support open access research and knowledge dissemination, not to mention academic freedom. In its association with CSIS, the U15 seems to have abandoned any pretence at critical thinking, a fundamental pillar of academic teaching and inquiry.

## Time to Hit Pause?

Canada is not the only country to be inundated with a discourse on the China threat promoted by security agencies such as CSIS. The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) took on an “increasingly public role, issuing warnings from 2017 onwards that foreign interference was occurring at ‘an unprecedented scale’ in Australia,” according to David Brophy, a specialist in Uyghur history at the University of Sidney.<sup>29</sup>

What is happening in Canada today also has a precedent from the McCarthy era in the United States when “the academy, an institution ostensibly dedicated to intellectual freedom, collaborated in curtailing that freedom,” attests Ellen W. Schrecker, the foremost scholar in the field.<sup>30</sup> Universities in Canada need to learn from that tragedy, which marred the lives and careers of thousands of scholars, artists, and activists in both the US and Canada.

In the 1960s, CAUT was able to negotiate an accord with the government to prevent CSIS intrusions on campus, the Pearson-Laskin Accord. But the government and university administrators are no longer respecting that accord. Left unchecked, there is a very real danger that Canadian universities will, for the first time in history, institutionally embrace CSIS on campus and implement research surveillance policies that could embroil us in further conflicts with China, racially profile Chinese Canadian researchers, constrict academic freedom, and undermine future technological innovation.

To avoid such a calamity, faculty associations and other representative bodies will have to consider their options quickly and carefully. These range from articulating an alternative research security plan, filing grievances on specific issues, taking claims to human rights tribunals, or taking legal action to prevent racial profiling or abusive research surveillance.

<sup>30</sup>David Brophy, *China Panic: Australia's Alternative to Paranoia and Pandering* (La Trobe University Press, 2021).

<sup>31</sup>See Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10 and Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

## Appendix A: Crimes of CSIS and US Intelligence Agencies

CSIS, has a track record that includes:

- Conspiring with the US authorities to illegally detain Maher Arar and subject him to extraordinary rendition to Iraq where he was imprisoned and tortured
- Advising then prime minister Jean Chretien to join the US in its illegal invasion of Iraq<sup>31</sup>
- Facilitating and conspiring with the US to imprison and torture Canadians Omar Khadr, Abdullah Almalki, Muayyed Nureddin, and Ahmad El Maati, which cost the Canadian government \$50 million in lawsuits
- illegally spying on Indigenous groups and environmentalists opposing the construction of oil pipelines in British Columbia, as revealed by the BC Civil Liberties Association
- Being racked by continual allegations of racism, homophobia, and Islamophobia on the job, including a lawsuit by five senior intelligence officers. Much of this has been recounted in the recent book *Agent of Change* by Huda Mukbil
- engaging in anti-Muslim surveillance involving “illegal practices such as threatening citizenship and refugee status, intimidating people in their homes during the night, and denying legal representation during interrogations.”<sup>32</sup>

- protecting a CSIS predator who four women have recently accused of rape, harassment, and the creation of a toxic workplace culture

If that is not bad enough, the U15 seems oblivious to the fact that CSIS is following the lead of US national security bodies including the National Security Agency and the CIA, which have a documented record of:

- Involvement in 70 covert and open regime change attempts during the Cold War;<sup>33</sup>
- Establishing a network of “black sites” such as Abu Gr-ib, to conduct torture (‘enhanced interrogation’ techniques) against suspected terrorists;
- Manufacturing evidence regarding Iraq’s supposed ‘weapons of mass destruction’ that led to the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003;
- Conducting programs ECHELON, STELLARWIND, and PRISM involving mass surveillance of citizens and allies.<sup>34</sup>
- Hacking into Huawei headquarters in 2013.

In light of this evidence, can the U15 in all honesty rely on CSIS and the Five Eyes to render objective information?

<sup>32</sup> Alan Barnes, “[Getting it Right: Canadian Intelligence Assessments on Iraq, 2002-2003](#),” *Intelligence and National Security*, 35.7, (2020): 933-34.

<sup>33</sup> Nagra, B., & Maurutto, P. (2023). Anti-Muslim Surveillance: Canadian Muslims’ Experiences with CSIS. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 9(3), 311-325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492231151587>

<sup>34</sup> Lindsey A. O’Rourke (2020) The Strategic Logic of Covert Regime Change: US-Backed Regime Change Campaigns during the Cold War, *Security Studies*, 29:1, 92-127, DOI: [10.1080/09636412.2020.1693620](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2020.1693620). See also Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York, Doubleday, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> For details see the on-line resource “[The Snowden Affair](#),” a collection of over 125 documents that document NSA’s surveillance activities, edited by Jeffrey T. Richelson, National security Archive of George Washington University.

## PART 3

# Militarization of Asia and the Pacific?

*“And unfortunately, what we’ve seen in the most recent incidents, on two occasions, the actions of People’s Republic of China fighter jets were deemed to be significantly unsafe. As outlined in our Indo-Pacific strategy, we’re going to continue to step up our forces in that region.”*

– Defence minister Bill Blair [on](#) recent confrontations in East Asia

The year 2018 marked a remarkable yet unheralded shift in Canadian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific. That year the Canadian government deployed Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) aircraft and frigates to East Asia in Operation Neon. Additional military commitments followed, and today the CAF are engaged in active deployments around Korea and the South China sea, frequently leading to confrontations with PRC forces. Does this new Canadian military profile in East Asia signal a departure from previous Canadian policy and the beginning of a new era of Canadian military intervention in the region? If so, this would constitute a major change that has taken place with little public consultation regarding the potential risks and ramifications.

In this section, we examine the origins of the changes in Canada’s military profile, and the correlation with the beginning of a crisis in Canada-China relations in 2018, which subsequently ballooned into Canada’s “China panic.” Tracking the motives, actions, and resistance to the changes that have occurred over the past five years, we provide a provisional interpretation for what has transpired and suggest that: the government has aligned the CAF with the US-led military encirclement of China; the significance in this alignment is in the legitimacy it lends US operations in the region; and that this shift has historical implications because it marks the end of a Canadian policy of avoiding military confrontation in the Pacific since the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Korea in 1957.

### The Vancouver Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (January 2018)

In January 2018, Canadian and US foreign ministers, Chrystia Freeland and Rex Tillerson, hosted the Vancouver Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on Security and Stability on the Korean Peninsula. The session brought together representatives of the allied nations that fought in Korea in the 1950-1953 war. It excluded China, Russia and North Korea, despite the fact North and South Korea had announced new initiatives in peacebuilding on the Korean peninsula.

Global Affairs Canada [stated](#) that the purpose of the jointly sponsored meeting was to “demonstrate solidarity in opposition to North Korea’s dangerous and illegal actions and to work together to strengthen diplomatic efforts toward a secure, prosperous and denuclearized Korean peninsula. To this end, foreign ministers will discuss ways to increase the effectiveness of the global sanctions regime in support of a rules-based international order.” Freeland stated that “a diplomatic solution” was both essential and possible.

The fact US defence secretary, Jim Mattis, accompanied Tillerson to the conference, however, underscored the US iron fist in Canada’s velvet glove. Contrary to Freeland’s emphasis on ‘diplomatic solutions,’ a Reuters [report](#) at the time suggested that the Summit would “probe how to boost maritime security around North Korea and options to interdict ships carrying prohibited goods in violation of sanctions.”

Given its years of deep involvement in the effort to get North Korea to end its nuclear program, the PRC was irate, and expressed its irritation publicly: “Since this meeting does not have legitimacy or representativeness, China has opposed the meeting from the very beginning,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang [stated](#). “While countries are committed to finding a proper solution for the peaceful settlement of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, some parties hold such a meeting in the name of the so-called United Nations command during the Cold War era. We do not know what the purpose of convening such a meeting is.”

After the summit, most commentators professed confusion regarding the goals and outcome of the meeting. One [pointed](#) out: “Inexplicably, the event didn’t include global powers Russia or China, North Korea’s most influential neighbours. Instead, countries such as Greece, Belgium, Colombia and Luxembourg were asked to attend – as if any of them have the clout to help resolve the Korean conflict. The absence of China was particularly perplexing.” A UBC analyst commented that “... our interests in

being seen as a middle power in this circumstance is not advanced by being seen as an instrument of a U.S. agenda, advocating a one-note, hard line extreme pressure strategy, and I think particularly in convening meetings in which key players are not involved.”<sup>1</sup>

The confusion and concern expressed in these statements derives from what seemed like a sudden and inexplicable shift from cooperation and engagement with China and Russia to deal with the nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula to one of exclusion and confrontation. The Canadian government soon made clear that it was moving towards further military intervention in the sensitive area, a process that has continued ever since.

## Canada’s Military Deploys to the Pacific

The upshot from the Vancouver Summit materialized in April 2018, when Chrystia Freeland [announced](#) that Canada would deploy military forces off Korea to enforce sanctions: “Canada has deployed a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) maritime patrol aircraft in the region to assist in this effort, in addition to assets being provided by the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> In the four years since this announcement, Canada has extended its military presence in the Asia Pacific. According to the CAF, this escalating presence aims at enforcing sanctions against North Korea, reinforcing partnerships with military allies, or reinforcing “the rules-based international order,” a concept that has come under criticism as departing from the centrality of UN principles and international law.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Canada has persisted in a more assertive posture in the Asia Pacific in three distinct areas of operations:

**Operation Neon** This new forward military positioning saw Canadian naval vessels as well as CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft based in Okinawa, operating over 1000 kilometres south of Japan beginning in 2018. Over the next five years, nine distinct deployments of frigates have taken place, assisted by supply ship Asterix, and CP-140 Aurora. The CAF have committed to maintaining these operations into 2026. In 2018, chief of the defence staff, General Wayne Eyre, was appointed deputy commander of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea, and, [according](#) to a 2023 announcement by the minister

of defence, the next deputy commander will also be a Canadian officer.

News reports indicate that the operations that began in 2018 immediately [led](#) to confrontation with Chinese air forces off the coast of the DPRK. These skirmishes are often referred to as buzzing. As a result, in 2022, the CAF declared that the PLAAF (People’s Liberation Army Air Force) was putting RCAF personnel at risk, an accusation denied by the PRC. Justin Trudeau repeated the complaint in June following year. Canada’s Operation Neon seems to have exacerbated tensions in the region and deserves critical assessment, however, PRC-Canadian confrontations have not been restricted to Operation Neon.

**Operation Projection (Indo-Pacific)** In early November (2023), the CBC [reported](#) that PRC jets had buzzed a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter operating off the HMCS Ottawa, putting the crews at risk, according to Canada’s minister of defence. The frigate and helicopter were operating in the South China Sea. A spokesperson for the PRC Defence Ministry [responded](#), stating that the helicopter had “approached the Chinese airspace in the Xisha Islands recently with unidentified intentions,” refused to respond to warnings, and had taken evasive actions.

What is notable about this particular incident is its location. The skirmish took place not near Korea but in the South China Sea. In 2018, the Canadian government decided to begin conducting “forward naval presence operations in the region as well as conduct cooperative deployments and participate in international naval exercises with partner nations.” These operations aim “to promote peace and stability in support of the rules-based international order”. Operation Projection is distinct from Operation Neon in both its mandate and its area of operations, although overlapping at times.

The first deployment began in April 2018, with the dispatch of the HMCS Vancouver to participate in the US-led “Pacific Partnership 2018,” followed by a series of annual dispatches for military exercise with US forces, often including support for Operation Neon. News reports capture the tenor of these exercises. In September 2023, Canada’s CBC News – The National broadcast a live report from aboard the H.M.C.S Ottawa, a Canadian

<sup>1</sup>Brian Job, in “Diplomacy on Agenda at North Korea Summit in Vancouver,” [Canadian Press](#), January 16, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Chrystia Freeland, “Canada to participate in initiative to counter North Korea’s maritime sanctions evasion,” Global Affairs Canada, April 28, 2018. At <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/04/canada-to-participate-in-initiative-to-counter-north-koreas-maritime-sanctions-evasion.html>.

<sup>3</sup>This phrase is a recurring theme justifying military intervention and has come under criticism. See most recently, John Dugard, The choice before us: International law or a ‘rules-based international order’?, *Leiden Journal of International Law* 36 (2023), 223-232.



frigate that was about to join US and Japanese naval vessels to sail through the Taiwan straits, heavily shadowed by PRC maritime forces. The reporter suggested that what was taking place on the water was a “microcosm for deteriorating relations between China and both Canada and the United States.”<sup>4</sup> The news report highlighted this deterioration by recalling that six years earlier, in May 2017, the same warship had arrived in Shanghai to a warm welcome from the PRC’s maritime forces.

In 2021, the Canadian navy participated in a US-led naval exercise, “Pacific Crown,” off Okinawa. Labelled a “stark warning to China,” the war games brought together three western aircraft carrier strike groups and a Japanese helicopter carrier that’s now able to launch F-35 stealth fighters.<sup>5</sup> The commander of the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG21), Steve Moorhouse, told the reporter “It’s an important message for those here that nations like ourselves really do believe in the freedom of navigation, in the freedom of trade and really are alarmed at the militarization of the area...” Western allies can work seamlessly together, he said.



Indigenous Hawaiians and allies protest RIMPAC 2022 in Kailua, Oahu. Photo by Ann Wright.

**RIMPAC** In August 2022, two Canadian warships, HMCS Vancouver and HMCS Winnipeg, departed Esquimalt naval base heading for San Diego and then Hawai’i to participate in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) war maneuvers

scheduled from June 29 to August 4. Just as the Canadian warships were departing Esquimalt, activists in Hawai’i gathered at Kailua near the Marine Corps Air Station on Kaneohe Bay to protest the impending visit of the RIMPAC warships, including Canada’s.

The US Pacific Fleet [reported](#) that the naval operations ended on August 4: “Twenty-six nations, 38 surface ships, three submarines, nine national land forces, more than 30 unmanned systems, approximately 170 aircraft and over 25,000 personnel participated in the 28th edition of the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC).” This was the largest maritime war exercise in the world with “26 nations, 38 surface ships, four submarines, nine national land forces, more than 30 unmanned systems, approximately 170 aircraft and more than 25,000 personnel participating.” The goal was to enhance naval collaboration for the US proposed agenda of “a free and open Indo-Pacific.” For the first time, CAF even dispatched the frigate HMCS Montreal from its Halifax port on the Atlantic to participate in the Pacific war games.

Canada’s Operation Neon, Operation Projection and its 2022 RIMPAC participation constitute a new military posture in the Pacific for Canada and poses important questions. It has meant that the CAF is now stationing its forces at both the US-controlled Kadena air base, as well as at its naval station, White Beach, on Okinawa, “an island chain doubly colonized by Japan and the United States,” - an island “sacrifice zone” according to Asian American scholar Jodi Kim.<sup>6</sup> Okinawans voiced their concerns in a recent Global television news report. Has the CAF become complicit in the ongoing dispossession of uchinanchu (Indigenous Okinawans) who, for the past seventy-five years, have continuously fought to regain their lands taken by the US military for military purposes?<sup>7</sup> Is the CAF in contravention of Global Affairs Canada’s commitment to “Enable Indigenous peoples’ representation and meaningful engagement in international discussions and decisions affecting them.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the CAF view that Operation Neon is a UN-sponsored operation is strongly contested. To be sure, the United Nations has invoked sanctions against

<sup>4</sup> “Canadian Warship’s High-Stakes Mission in the Taiwan Strait,” *CBC National News*, Sept 9, 2023, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaN-bSbr63UM>.

<sup>5</sup> Murray Brewster, “A Joint Naval Exercise in the Pacific Sent a Stark Warning to China,” *CBC News*, October 8, 2021

<sup>6</sup> Jodi Kim, *Settler Garrison*, 63.

<sup>7</sup> For an introduction to Okinawan history and the fight against the US military presence, see Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Lowman & Littlefield, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Global Affairs Canada, “[Action on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples – 2021-2025](#),” (Ottawa, 2020)

the DPRK, but there is no UN mission to enforce these sanctions. Operation Neon is part of a US-led attempt to use the UN Command moniker from the Korean War to justify its military enforcement of sanctions, a move that has never received UN approval.<sup>9</sup> That the UN Command has not been formally dissolved is testament only to the tragedy that Korea, north and south, has suffered since its annexation by Japan in 1910.

## Context and Implications

In the summer of 2020, director of the Rideau Institute and former Canadian ambassador on disarmament, Peggy Mason, observed that “we face a daily barrage of material in the media demonizing China at every turn.” Drawing on Jeffrey Sachs, she reminded readers that “the only country with a defence strategy calling for global dominance is the United States of America.” She then drew attention to Sachs’ comparison of military deployment: “The US...has around 800 overseas military bases, while China has just one (a small naval base in Djibouti).”<sup>10</sup>

For the most part, however, the deployment of CAF to East Asia has occurred without much discussion or debate in Canada. As the skirmishes with PRC military forces increase, the ramifications are coming home, suggesting that it is worth taking a closer look at the policy shift that has taken place.

Canada’s military capacity in the Pacific remains minor compared to other US allies such as Japan or even Australia. The significance of the recent military deployments and budget increases for the CAF in the Asia Pacific lie elsewhere. A visit to Ottawa by US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, in August 2019 is suggestive. Canadian foreign minister in 2019, Chrystia Freeland, stated in the press conference afterwards, that Canada and the US were “indispensable allies” in NORAD and NATO, quickly adding: “Today, alongside our American allies, Canadian armed forces ships and maritime patrol aircraft are deployed under Operation Neon to ensure sanctions are

imposed against North Korea, and the deputy commander of the United Nations force in Korea is a Canadian.” Pompeo replied, “I thank them [Trudeau and Freeland] profusely for their solidarity with the United States on a wide range of issues. Chrystia mentioned many of them, but North Korea and Venezuela in particular, Canada has been a fantastic partner.”

Pompeo’s linking Canada’s support re: North Korea to Canadian support on Venezuela reflects the way in which the US harnesses Canadian actions to justify its own transgressions, which, in the case of Venezuela, was a gross example of both US and Canadian foreign interference in that country.<sup>11</sup> Is this what is also happening in the Asia Pacific? Is the deployment of the CAF to the Asia Pacific a public commitment on the part of the Canadian government to reinforce the US strategy of military containment of China developed by the Trump administration and continued by the Biden administration?<sup>12</sup>

The US administration that came to power in 2017 let loose its anti-China hawks (John Bolton, Mike Pompeo, and others) who collectively designated the PRC as its main adversary in the world. As discussed in Part I, both the 2018 National Security Strategy and National Defence Strategy focused on China, and the renaming of the Asia Pacific as the “Indo-Pacific” reflected its hopes to recruit India in the encirclement of China. By 2019, the “China Threat” had become dogma, with the Indo-Pacific defined as the military’s “priority theatre” according to the US Defence Department’s Indo-Pacific Strategy Report.

The hard-line stance against China was then sustained and even intensified by the Biden administration when it came to power in 2021 and announced new measures including:

- the signing of AUKUS (Australia/UK/US), a trilateral military pact for Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines to deploy against China, a move that caused a furor as it involved Australia tearing up a multi-billion-dollar contract with France

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the Japanese government has participated in this charade, claiming the “[Agreement Regarding the Status of the United Nations Forces in Japan](#)” (1954) is the basis of the Canadian Armed Forces, [as well as U.K.](#), Australia and France, using the U.S. Air Force’s Kadena base in Okinawa. The International Association of Democratic Lawyers and the Confederation of Lawyers of Asia and the Pacific [wrote](#) early this year to the United Nations pointing out “abuse of the UN flag by the so-called ‘United Nations Command’ (‘UNC’), which is not a UN entity under control of the United Nations, in South Korea and Japan today, [is] in violation of the new UN Flag Code.”

<sup>10</sup> The comments were part of a two-part [blog](#), Peggy Mason, “Constructive Engagement with China is a Global Imperative,” July 2020 (Rideau Institute). Canada-China Focus (CCF) and the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute have also adopted critical perspectives. The author is on the advisory board of the CCF.

<sup>11</sup> On Canadian interference in Venezuela, see Canadian Press reporter Mike Blanchfield’s [article](#), “Quiet Canadian diplomacy helped Guaido’s anti-Madura movement in Venezuela,” January 26, 2019, Canadian Press.

<sup>12</sup> The US began to reinforce its military presence in the Asia Pacific earlier with the Obama administration’s ‘Pivot to Asia’ strategy in 2010-2011, see Kenneth G. Leberthal, “[The American Pivot to Asia](#),” (Brookings, December 2011); Janine Davidson, “The U.S. ‘Pivot to Asia,’” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, 21 (June 2014): 77-82.

- establishing the Quad, a military consultative pact among the U.S., Australia, India, and Japan to encircle China
- creating a new “China Mission Center” within the CIA to take on what the agency’s director, William Burns, described as “the most important geopolitical threat we face in the 21st Century, an increasing adversarial Chinese government,” according to the New York Times.

As a result, what the U.S. today calls its Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) includes: “375,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel including U.S. Pacific Fleet of approximately 200 ships (including five aircraft carrier strike groups), nearly 1,100 aircraft, and more than 130,000 sailors and civilians; Marine Corps Forces, Pacific with two Marine Expeditionary Forces and about 86,000 personnel and 640 aircraft; U.S. Pacific Air Forces comprises of approximately 46,000 airmen and civilians and more than 420 aircraft; U.S. Army Pacific has approximately 106,000 personnel, plus over 300 aircraft and five watercraft; more than 1,200 Special Operations personnel; Department of Defense civilian employees in the Indo-Pacific Command AOR number about 38,000.” This level of lethality represents an ongoing threat to peace in the Pacific.

Canada’s defence establishment anticipated, and then fully embraced, augmenting the US military presence in the Pacific.<sup>13</sup> By October 2022, Canada’s chief of defence staff, Wayne Eyre, declared: “Russia and China are not just looking at regime survival but regime expansion. They consider themselves to be at war with the West,” he said. “They strive to destroy the social cohesion of liberal democracies and the credibility of our own institutions to ensure our model of government is seen as a failure.”

The CAF’s military tilt toward the Pacific was reinforced in Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy released in late 2022. “We are not just going to engage the Indo-Pacific, we are going to lead,” stated Canada’s foreign minister in announcing the new strategy. China is identified as an “increasing-

ly disruptive global power that Canada would “challenge whenever necessary,” and only cooperate with “if we must.” It allocated nearly \$500 million to increase the Canadian military’s presence in the Asia Pacific, and more than \$227 million to bolster its national security agencies (including CSIS, CSE, RCMP, and CBSA) in the region. This funding reflects an expanded role for the Five Eyes intelligence network in Asia and the Pacific.

## Historicizing the Shift

Historicizing Canada’s recent military tilt into the Pacific suggests that what we are witnessing is, in fact, a shift away from previous Canadian military policy in Asia and the Pacific.

The CAF participated in the Korean War from 1950-1953; however, the 1953 armistice in Korea followed by the 1954 Geneva accords resulted in the withdrawal of all Canadian troops from Korea by 1957.<sup>14</sup> In 1955, when the U.S. government promoted the idea of a NATO-type alliance for Asia, the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), “Canadian reaction was negative,” and it declined to participate.<sup>15</sup> Since then, the Canadian government has eschewed military deployments to Asia, except to participate in minimal ways with its allies, or as part of peace-keeping missions, as in the case of the International Commissions for Supervision and Control (ICSC) for Indochina (1954-1974).<sup>16</sup>

Canada’s participation in the ICSC was one of the starting points for Canada’s reputation as a peacekeeper, allowing it to avoid sending troops alongside the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand contingents fighting in Vietnam.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, it was the PRC, with India, that nominated Canada to the commission in 1954.

For Lester Pearson and others, the ostensible and practical reason to avoid participation in SEATO, or to deploy military forces to Asia and the Pacific, was that they saw

<sup>13</sup> Canada’s 2017 National Defence plan *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* illustrated the imminent changes being contemplated. Canada, the report stated, would need to balance its fundamental relations with “traditional alliances, including NORAD, NATO, and the Five-Eyes community,” with the need “to engage with emerging powers, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.” Canada, Department of Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017), 57.

<sup>14</sup> Major John Kim, “Seoul Search: Canada’s Future in the Indo-Pacific,” (Canadian Forces College, nd) at <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/23/305/Kim.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Bothwell, “Eyes West: Canada and the Cold War in Asia,” in Greg Donaghy, ed. *Canada and the Early Cold War* (Ottawa: DFAIT, 1998), 67.

<sup>16</sup> AF also sent representatives to the military armistice commission for Korea (UNCMAC), a body formed to supervise the truce.

<sup>17</sup> About twenty years ago, Arthur Menzies recounted how an Australian officer had accosted him upon arrival to ake up his ambassadorial duties, to say “You were with us in South African, in the world wars, and in Korea but you fucked us in Vietnam!”

<sup>18</sup> As cited in Adam Chapnick, *Canada’s Voice: The Public Life of John Wendell Holmes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>19</sup> See Greg Donaghy, “Pierre Trudeau and Canada’s Pacific Tilt, 1945-1984,” *International Journal*, 74,1 (2019), 135-150, and David Webster, “Mental Maps and Canada’s Postwar Asian Policy,” *International Journal*, 75,4 (2020), 548-562.

deployment of armed forces to Asia as possibly detracting from Canada's military commitment to NATO. There was an additional reason, however. Pearson and others, including John Holmes, who the RCMP hounded out of Canada's foreign affairs department because he was gay, had begun to see the need for a degree of Canadian autonomy as a counterweight to its dependence on the United States. This gave rise to theories of Canada as a "middle power", which meant that Canada could "when we want, differ from our major allies and do not belong to any bloc."<sup>18</sup> The advent of Pierre Trudeau to the leadership of the Liberal government in 1968 saw further shifts including, finally, recognition of the PRC and a more active but peaceful foreign policy for Canada in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>19</sup> Some scholars and officials in Canadian foreign policy communities continue to aspire to this notion, while others promote closer integration with a US empire.

Canada's new military profile in the Asia Pacific is a definite step towards tighter military integration with the US in Asia and the Pacific, a de facto reversal of a policy to resist military intervention represented by Canada's refusal to join in SEATO. In addition, aligning the CAF with the US military in the Pacific suggests Canada's aspirations as a 'middle power' hold little relevance today. Instead, the Canadian government is again taking its lead from the Five Eyes.

## Canada, the Five Eyes, and the Pacific

The states in the Five Eyes, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom constituted an historically powerful bloc in Asia and the Pacific, often allying with others, including Japan, South Korea, and some southeast Asian nations to assure US power in the Pacific.<sup>20</sup> Understanding the genealogy of this bloc reveals insights into the politics of race and empire in the region.

The Five Eyes alliance came together in the 1948-52 period initially as an intelligence-sharing arrangement. It evolved out of Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain racializing appeal at Fulton Missouri in 1946, where he called for a "fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples" to enforce world peace.<sup>21</sup> Aimed at the rising

forces of decolonization, Churchill's speech was a paternalistic call to arms: "This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States ... If the population of the English-speaking Commonwealth be added to that of the United States, with all that such co-operation implies in the air, on the sea, all over the globe, and in science and industry, and in moral force, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure."

Appealing for unity of the Anglosphere, Churchill was in fact calling for the strengthening of a US-UK centred alliance to perpetuate liberal imperial power and to assure the continuation of global white supremacy. One of the outcomes of this appeal was the creation of the Five Eyes alliance (among the English-speaking states), which was to become both a political and intelligence bloc. Its racial origins still echo today in the comment by retired Canadian Brigadier-General James Cox, that the Five Eyes have an "affinity strengthened by their common Anglo-Saxon culture."<sup>22</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War, the Five Eyes alliance was instrumental in constructing what Japanese American historian Akira Iriye described as the "San Francisco System." Named after the city that hosted the signing of the peace treaty with Japan in 1951, Iriye described what emerged between 1945 and 1954: "The rearmament of Japan, continued presence of American forces in Japan, their military alliance, and the retention by the United States of Okinawa and the Bonin Islands. In return the United States would remove all restrictions on Japan's economic affairs and renounce the right to demand reparations and war indemnities. Here was a program for turning Japan from a conquered and occupied country into a military ally..."<sup>23</sup> The U.S. also supported military alliances between New Zealand and Australia, and signed pacts with the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan, as well as Japan.

The US was able to mobilize the Five Eyes bloc to support its intervention in Korea, and to assure its domination of the peace treaty conference in San Francisco, which

<sup>20</sup> However, the cohesion of this bloc has not always been stable: New Zealand and Canada parted ways with the others on a number of issues, e.g. New Zealand's clash with the US on nuclear issues, and Canada's refusal to participate in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Excerpted from J. Price, *Orienteering Canada*, 126-127.

<sup>22</sup> James Cox, "Canada and the Five Eyes Intelligence Community," (Ottawa: Canadian International Council and Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2012), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Akira Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Longman, 1997), chapter 9.

was effectively a peace treaty without Asia. Most countries that had suffered from Japanese imperialism were either excluded, or boycotted the conference, or refused to ratify the treaty. Many of the territorial disputes in East Asia currently in the news date from this unjust treaty.<sup>24</sup> The Five Eyes, however, provided the legitimacy for the war in Korea, the peace treaty, and the San Francisco system that emerged at the time. While most commentators frame this as part of the “Cold War” with the Soviet Union (and later China), applied to Asia the term is entirely Eurocentric and misleading.

Assured of support among its Five Eyes allies, US hegemony in the Pacific was predicated on stopping decolonization and blocking national liberation movements in Indochina, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Burma, and elsewhere, unless they adhered to US control. Those who pursued an independent course were subsequently considered offshoots of Soviet expansionism, a reductionist absurdity rife with racist overtones. The results were the Korean War and Vietnam wars, with their horrendous loss of life.<sup>25</sup>

Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center and founding director of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, points out that, historically, anti-Asian violence in the United States is directly related to US foreign policy in Asia: During the Vietnam War, Asian people were dehumanized. The brutal massacre of Vietnamese women and children in My Lai, Vietnam, was conducted by U.S. soldiers who viewed the Vietnamese people as less than human. The U.S. military used napalm, Agent Orange, antipersonnel weapons and massive bombings to target and kill millions of civilians, all justified through the lens of white supremacy and anti-communism.<sup>26</sup>

Today, that violence has re-emerged as successive US administrations brandish an inflated “China Threat”, seeking out eternal enemies to justify their global wars. This rebranding of the ‘Yellow Peril’ reflects the persistence and malleability of racist perceptions of Asia.<sup>27</sup> These warnings echo those by Yuen Pau Woo, Xiaobei Chen, and others cited earlier in this paper.

Unfortunately, the recasting of the Canadian presence in Asia as a military one, in the midst of Canada’s “China Panic”, returns us to an era rife with the dangers of racism, anti-communism, and war. Given this context, Canada’s justification for its intervention – that it is conducting UN operations near Korea or enforcing the “rules-based international order” -- deserves much closer scrutiny.

Australian historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds point out in *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, that the US-UK-Australia invasion of Iraq in 2003 “recapitulates the Anglo-Saxon solidarity of earlier times with devastating consequences.”<sup>28</sup> Is Canada now in the process of doing in Asia what we wisely avoided doing in Iraq in 2003?

Ongoing pressures to conform to the demands of the US empire in the Pacific derive to some extent from the similarities between Canada and the United States as settler colonies. Of the Five Eyes, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are settler offshoots from their progenitor, the United Kingdom. The westward expansion across the Pacific was predicated, first and foremost, on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in these settler colonies.<sup>29</sup> Subsequent expansion across the Pacific and into Asia forced an accommodation between the imperial powers, the UK, and the US.

<sup>24</sup> Kimie Hara at the University of Waterloo is one of the world’s foremost scholars in this field. See her edited works, *Shifting Regional Order in East Asia, Proceedings* (Renison University College, University of Waterloo, 2010) and *The San Francisco System and Its Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> For a full account of this process see John Price, *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Kent Wong and Stewart Kwoh, “Anti-Asian Violence and the US Role in Asia Research Ethics,” Portside, (May 10, 2021) <https://portside.org/2021-05-10/anti-asian-violence-and-us-role-asia>.

<sup>27</sup> See Brandon P. Seto, “Paternalism and Peril: Shifting U.S. Racial Perceptions of the Japanese and Chinese Peoples from World War II to the Early Cold War,” *Asian Perspectives*, XIII (Spring/Summer 2015), 57-78.

<sup>28</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 12.

<sup>29</sup> Indigenous resurgence globally has led scholars to increasingly distinguish between colonialism and settler colonialism and given rise to the study of the latter as a distinct field. See Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and his “Understanding Colonialism and Settler Colonialism as Distinct Formations,” *Interventions* 16.5, 615-613; also, Wolfe, Patrick (2006). “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4) and *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016); and Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2015).

The smaller settler states of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have not always adhered to the policies of the UK-US axis.<sup>30</sup> However, Canada's "China Panic" today, with its ongoing deployment of Canadian forces to East Asia, suggests that the era of Canada searching for autonomy from the US is no longer on the agenda, particularly given the NDP's hostility towards China. Are we now witnessing Canada's evolution into a 'sentinel state' for the United States?<sup>31</sup>

In an increasingly polarized world, millions in the streets of both the global north and south are aligning themselves against the forces of what some call colonial racial capitalism.<sup>32</sup> Those of us on the territories called Canada are increasingly obliged to begin difficult conversations and make critical decisions as we face the existential crises of war and environmental degradation that imperil planetary survival. May we do so in a way that unifies the many and isolates the forces of empire and war.

<sup>30</sup> See Bryce Wakefield, "Perfidious Aotearoa? New Zealand's Five Eyes Problem," April 30, 2021, *Australian Outlook* (Australian Institute of International Affairs).

<sup>31</sup> Whether this is a result of increasing economic integration with the United States, the cumulative impact of the Harper government's conservative reforms, or the more recent effects of the China Panic described in this paper, or all three, requires further research, discussion, and debate.

<sup>32</sup> See Susan Koshy, Lisa Marie Cacho, Jodi A. Byrd, Brian Jordan Jefferson, *Colonial Racial Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).

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**The National Security Reference Group (CAUT):** The Canadian Association of University Teachers established this group in the spring of 2023 in light of growing concerns about racial profiling and restrictions to academic freedom arising from new national security guidelines being imposed by the government on researchers. Composed of representatives from universities across the country, the reference group monitors the impact of such guidelines and advises the Canadian Association of University Teachers on potential measures to counteract the effects of racial profiling and restrictions on academic freedom. Members of the group contributed to this discussion paper through their ongoing efforts and critical analysis, in providing specific materials for the paper, and in providing feedback to initial drafts.

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