

Canada's media foments anti-China campaign after Meng arrest

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Since Canada, acting at Washington's behest, arrested senior Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, Canada's major media outlets have gone into high gear to justify her seizure as "lawful" and to depict China as a menace to Canada and the world.

The criminal charges the US has brought against Meng are transparently trumped up and politically motivated. Yet this has not stopped the media from greeting China's complaints over Meng's arrest with hoots, and from portraying Canada as under attack from an overbearing and bellicose China.

The *Globe and Mail* gloated, in a December 14 editorial titled "The end of the Trudeau government's China delusion," that Meng's Dec. 1 detention and the subsequent tit-for-tat arrest of two Canadian citizens in China have put paid to the Liberal government's plans for a free trade deal with Beijing. "The case of Meng Wanzhou has torpedoed the Trudeau government's China policy," enthused the *Globe*, the traditional mouthpiece of the Bay Street financial elite. "At the same time, it has also sunk China's Canada policy. Call it a win-win."

The neoconservative *National Post* was equally jubilant. Writing in the wake of the arrest by Chinese authorities of former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor, the *Post* declared their arrests could "prove useful," because "they ought to make it impossible for our prime minister, or any future prime ministers, to keep turning a blind eye to the criminal and thuggish nature of Beijing's rulers."

This turns reality on its head. The Beijing regime is no doubt authoritarian, representing as it does the capitalist oligarchy that emerged from the Stalinist bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism in the People's Republic. But it is not the aggressor in this case.

On the contrary, Canada, in collusion with its closest geostrategic and economic ally, mounted a political provocation, effectively kidnapping Meng on the very same day that US President Donald Trump met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit with the ostensible aim of reaching a deal to settle their US-instigated tariff war.

The US is seeking to extradite Meng to face two charges of fraud, each of which carries a potential penalty of 30 years in prison. The charges arise from Washington's unilateral

extraterritorial sanctions on Iran—sanctions that in their global reach are both illegal and tantamount to an act of war. As observers have noted, Meng has clearly been singled out for exemplary treatment. Till now the US had not tried to hold executives of major corporations personally liable when seeking retribution for alleged cases of "sanctions busting," choosing rather to levy financial penalties on the corporations involved.

The day after Meng's arrest was made public, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau acknowledged that he was warned in advance about the planned action. Trump's National Security Adviser, John Bolton, also revealed that he knew about the plan to detain Meng, underscoring that her impending arrest was discussed at the highest levels of both the US and Canadian states.

Acting on the orders of Canada's Justice Minister and Attorney-General Jody Wilson-Raybould, Crown prosecutors sought to deny bail to Meng, who in addition to being Huawei's Chief Financial Officer is the daughter of the company's founder and current CEO, Ren Zhengfei. Instead, a judge imposed onerous and humiliating bail conditions on Meng. These include that she must wear an electronic ankle tag at all times and pay for a round-the-clock security detail tasked with watching her every move, until her extradition hearing is concluded, a process that is expected to take many months.

US President Donald Trump has himself underlined the political character of the charges against Meng, exploding Trudeau's pretense that her arrest was simply a legal-administrative matter. Last week Trump said he might intervene in Meng's case if it would help the progress of trade talks with China. In other words, Meng is to be used as a bargaining chip in US imperialism's drive to subordinate China to its global predatory economic and geostrategic interests.

Reports have since emerged confirming that the arrest of Meng is part of a carefully prepared campaign, mounted by the United States and its allies in the Five Eyes global spy network, to prevent Huawei and other Chinese telecommunications and computer companies, from expanding their influence in global markets.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has revealed that a meeting of Five Eyes intelligence chiefs in Halifax, Nova Scotia last July discussed measures to combat the influence of Huawei and

Chinese technology more broadly in the development of global 5G networks. The US, Australia, and New Zealand have already banned Huawei from their respective 5G markets, and Washington is pressuring Britain and Canada to follow suit.

According to a report in Monday's *Globe and Mail*, the Halifax meeting, which Trudeau attended in part, was the second time this year "spy chiefs from the Five Eyes intelligence network briefed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ... about the national-security risk from Chinese high-tech giant Huawei."

For both commercial and military-security reasons, US imperialism is determined to prevent China from becoming a major player in global technology markets, especially in the area of wireless 5G communications. As Michael Morell, who twice served as the acting director of the CIA put it in a Dec. 14 *Washington Post* column, the US is engaged in a "tech war" with Beijing.

Morell—no doubt outlining the ambitions of the Pentagon and National Security Agency should the US dominate the world's 5G networks—warned that China could use Huawei-developed 5G technology as "espionage platforms;" and, since 5G will be "particularly suitable for connecting things...and other mission-critical functions," to conduct "sabotage, as well." The article concluded in a belligerent militarist tone, "There may not be an end to this technological cold war anytime soon, but it is vital for our national security that we not cede the field...and win the battle for 5G."

This is part of a much broader US-led strategy of confrontation towards China, arising in response to the loss of American imperialism's global economic dominance. Beginning with the Obama administration's "Pivot" to Asia, Washington has vastly expanded the military resources it has deployed in the Asia-Pacific to prepare for an armed clash with China.

American warships and planes have repeatedly launched provocations over disputed territories in the South China Sea. These tensions have only escalated under Trump, whose tariffs against steel, aluminum, and other imports are principally aimed at forcing Beijing to permit greater foreign ownership in key economic sectors and to abandon its plans to make China a high-tech leader, under its so-called "made in China 2025" strategy.

The *Globe* and *National Post* editorials welcoming the Meng affair as an opportunity to shift the Trudeau government and public opinion behind a more aggressive stance against China underscore the broad support within the Canadian ruling circles for the US offensive against China.

During the past year, both the media and security-intelligence establishment have stepped up pressure on the government and other institutions to take a hardline stance towards China.

This included media support or at least acquiescence to Trump's imposition on Canada of a clause in the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that gives

Washington an effective veto over any future free trade deal between Ottawa and Beijing.

In his maiden public speech as head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), David Vigneault warned of national security threats to Canada from foreign technology. While he did not mention China by name, this was clearly understood to be his target.

Last week, the *Globe* revealed that senior CSIS officials met with representatives of the country's top research universities to urge them to beware of Huawei and curb Huawei-funded academic research.

Important sections of Canadian big business are concerned about the potential damage to Canada-China trade caused by the deterioration of bilateral relations.

But the Canadian ruling class views maintenance of its economic and military-security alliance with the US and of North American global hegemony as vital to upholding and advancing its own imperialist interests.

That is why not only has the Trudeau government done Washington's bidding in the Meng case and key corporate media voices pressed Ottawa to join the US in taking a more belligerent stance against Beijing.

It is also why successive Conservative and Liberal governments have taken steps, behind the backs of the Canadian people, to integrate Canada ever more fully into the US military-strategic offensive against China. These include:

? The Harper Conservative government's conclusion of a secret agreement with the US in 2013 for enhanced cooperation between the US and Canadian militaries in the Asia-Pacific.

? The Canadian Armed Forces' negotiation of "forward-basing" agreements with Singapore and South Korea to facilitate military deployments in the event of a conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

? The Liberal government's identification of China as a "global strategic threat" in its June 2017 National Defence Policy Review—the same review that announced a more than 70 percent increase in military spending over the next decade.

? The Canadian military's deployment of ships and submarines to the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca, and its assertion Canada must have a growing presence in these waters to assert its "strategic interests" and assure its role as a "global player."



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