

US and Canadian elites demand Trudeau government toughen its anti-China stance

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The American and Canadian ruling elites are demanding Canada's Liberal government fall fully in line with Washington's ever more aggressive stance against China.

Although Ottawa has been a key partner in Washington's military-strategic offensive against Beijing, strong pressure is now being brought to bear on the Trudeau government to go still further. For starters, by banning the China-based telecommunications giant Huawei from Canada's 5G network and by ruling out any prospect of a free trade deal with China.

Major media outlets in the US and Canada, together with the opposition Conservatives and leading representatives of Canada's security-intelligence apparatus, seized on the arrest in Vancouver early last month of Huawei chief executive Meng Wanzhou to incite a virulently anti-China campaign. Meng was arrested by Canadian authorities at the Trump administration's behest for allegedly violating Washington's punishing illegal sanctions regime against Iran.

In reality, her detention was a deliberate political provocation, which took place the very same day that Trump met with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to discuss their trade-war tariff dispute. If a Canadian court approves Meng's extradition to the United States, she could face up to 30 years in prison.

Media outlets like the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* have exploited Meng's arrest to whip up hostility against China. Even though the fraudulent charges against her have nothing to do with Huawei's role in 5G communications, the media have breathlessly repeated the claims of the US intelligence establishment and Canadian anti-China hawks that Huawei is a pliant tool of the Chinese government, and therefore a grave national security threat.

Media commentators now say that it is only a matter of time before Canada joins its partners in the US National Security Agency-led "Five Eyes" spy network in excluding Huawei from the development of its 5G network.

The attack on Huawei is part of a fierce struggle for supremacy in global technology markets. The US ruling elite

is increasingly worried that China is emerging as a major force in new communications and AI technologies, which would open up multi-billion-dollar commercial opportunities around the world. This is part of a much broader conflict, with the US political and military establishment identifying China as their main rival for global hegemony. Washington is determined to do everything it can, up to and including all-out military conflict, to block Beijing's rise.

As one of US imperialism's closest allies, Canada has been intimately involved in Washington's increasingly aggressive policy toward China. In 2013, the Canadian and US militaries concluded a secret agreement to jointly coordinate operations in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, Canadian Armed Forces have become far more active in an arc stretching from the Straits of Malacca, the lifeline for the oil and other resources that power China's economy, to the Sea of Japan.

Canadian warships have participated in so-called "freedom of navigation" exercises in the South China Sea, where they have frequently come into contact with Chinese ships. Last month, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff General Jonathan Vance accused China of "inappropriate behaviour" after several of its aircraft flew close to a Canadian surveillance plane patrolling in international waters off the coast of North Korea.

The Trudeau government identified China as a "global threat" in the national defence policy it adopted in 2017. That policy praised US imperialism for the "outsized role" it had played in stabilizing the world order since the Second World War, and pledged to raise military spending by over 70 percent by 2026 to ensure Canada can play a frontline role in the major military conflicts of the 21st century.

The difference now is that the Trump administration has dramatically ratcheted up tensions with Beijing throughout the past year, but particularly in recent months. This has included the imposition of punishing trade tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese imports, US attempts to strategically "flip" North Korea so as to establish Pyongyang as a US client regime on China's

border, and Trump's shift away from a focus on the US role in the Middle East to concentrate on directly confronting China.

In addition, the Trump administration insisted that the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) contain a clause prohibiting signatories from concluding free trade agreements with "non-market economies," a clear reference to China, without Washington's prior approval.

In a further sign of escalating tensions, Reuters reported late last month that Trump is considering issuing an executive order prohibiting US companies from buying advanced technology from Chinese companies, including Huawei and ZTE, a microchip manufacturer.

Washington's targeting of China enjoys bipartisan agreement. Immediately following Meng's detention, Democratic and Republican senators issued statements that welcomed her arrest, but emphasized that Canada had to go further and clamp down on Huawei's activities. Threats were even made that intelligence sharing between the two countries could be downgraded if Huawei continues to participate in developing 5G in Canada.

Democratic Senator Mark Warner, who is also vice-chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, reiterated this warning in an interview last week with CBC's "Power and Politics" broadcast. He claimed that "if a country were to purchase (Huawei 5G) equipment, it might have built-in back doors so that, down the line, once the equipment was installed, the Chinese could intercept messages, communications [and] violate the security of the networks." Such a "vulnerability in the Canadian system," Warner added, "would make America vulnerable. And vice-versa," because Canadian and US "telecom networks are totally meshed together."

Of course, Senator Warner—who has also been leading the campaign for internet censorship in the name of combating "Russian interference"—failed to mention that the NSA, as was exposed by Edward Snowden, has worked with the US tech giants to build precisely such back doors so that it can spy on people around the world.

Last month, the *New York Times*, which is associated with the Democratic Party-wing of the US ruling establishment, published an article denouncing global consultancy firm McKinsey for doing business with China and Russia. Significantly, the *Times* reserved special criticism for McKinsey's Canadian-born chief executive Dominic Barton, who is a prominent adviser to the Trudeau government, serving as chair of its blue chip advisory council on economic growth.

Under these conditions, powerful sections of the US and Canadian ruling elites want to remove any ambiguity about Ottawa's readiness to follow US imperialism in lock-step in

confrontation with China.

Conservative leader Andrew Scheer has not only urged Trudeau to exclude Huawei from Canada's 5G network, but also demanded that Ottawa demonstratively abandon any plans to negotiate a free trade agreement with China. "We know that the government in China has been involved in cyber attacks," Scheer said. "I look at our partners around the world, our traditional allies, our NATO partners who are making the same assessment. We share so much with them and rely on their technology, their expertise and interoperability in many aspects of our own armed forces."

The Liberal government has responded by indicating that action against Huawei could be imminent. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, who collaborates daily with the top brass of the American security-intelligence apparatus, said in a television interview that the matter of Huawei is now under government review.

Meanwhile, Ottawa has solicited statements of support from Britain, the US, and European Union for its treatment of Meng, which has been denounced by Beijing as a politically-motivated frame-up

The statements all claimed that Meng's detention was based on the "rule of law" and that politics and geopolitics played no role in Ottawa's decision to apprehend her. Additionally, they condemned China's detention of two Canadian nationals, diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor, who Beijing has accused of endangering China's national security.

Even so, the dashing of any prospect of closer trade relations with China is causing consternation among sections of big business, who fear that Canadian imperialism's heavy dependence on exports to the US makes it highly vulnerable. This has been forcefully brought home by events during the past two years, including Trump's demand that NAFTA be renegotiated; the imposition of US tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum imports and the more general descent into trade war; and the foundering of the Transatlantic US-European alliance, which the Canadian elite has depended on not just to assert its predatory interests on the world stage, but also to help offset US pressure.



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